

# THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1869.

ROLAND YORKE.

*A SEQUEL TO "THE CHANNINGS."*

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," "GEORGE CANTERBURY'S WILL," &c.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### RESTLESS WANDERINGS.

THE commotion was great. Six days had elapsed since Arthur Channing's singular disappearance, and he had never been heard of.

Six days ! In a case of this nature, six days to anxious friends will seem almost like six weeks. Nay, and longer. The circumstances must still be fresh in the mind of the reader. And, while on the topic, it may be well and right to state that these circumstances, this loss, occurred just as written ; or about to be written ; and are not a rechauffé from a dish somewhat recently served to the public in real life.

Arthur Channing arrived at the Euston Square Station on a certain evening already told of, and was met there by Roland Yorke. Later, soon after eight, he went to the private hotel in Norfolk Street, in which a room had been engaged for him, and where he had stayed before. Roland saw him go in : the waiter, Binns, received him, and left him in the coffee-room reading his letters. Upon the waiter's entering the room nearly half an hour subsequently, he found it empty. A small parcel and an umbrella belonging to Mr. Channing were there, but he himself was not. Naturally the waiter concluded that he had but stepped out temporarily. He was mistaken, however. From that moment to this, nothing had been seen or heard of Arthur Channing.

If ever Roland Yorke went nigh to lose his mind, it was now. Strangers thought he must be a candidate for Bedlam. Totally neglecting the exigencies of the office, he went tearing about like a lunatic. From one place to another, from this spot to that, backwards and forwards and round again, strode Roland, as if his legs went on wires. His aspect was fierce, his hair wild. The main resting-posts, at which he halted by turns, were Scotland Yard, Waterloo Bridge, and the London docks.

The best that Roland's dark fears could suggest was, that Arthur had been murdered. Murdered for the sake of the money he had about him, and then put quietly out of the way. Waterloo Bridge, bearing a reputation for having been a former chosen receptacle for mysterious carpet-bags, was of course pitched upon by Roland as an ill-omened element in the tragedy now. It had also just happened that a man, drowned from one of the bridges, had been found in the London docks: having drifted in, no doubt, with an entering or leaving ship. This was quite enough for Roland. Morning after morning would find him there; and St. Katharine's docks, being nearer, sometimes had him twice in the day.

Putting aside Roland's migrations, and his out-spoken fears of dark deeds, others, interested, were to the full as much alarmed as he. The facts were more than singular: they were mysterious. From the time that Arthur Channing had entered the hotel in Norfolk Street—or, to be strictly correct—from a few minutes subsequent to that, when the waiter, Binns, had left him in the coffee-room, he seemed to have disappeared. The police could make nothing of it. Mr. Galloway, who had been at once communicated with by Hamish Channing, was nearly as much assailed by fears as Roland, and sent up letters or telegrams every other hour in the day.

The first and most natural theory taken up, as to the cause of the disappearance, was this—that Arthur Channing had received some news, amidst the letters given to him, that caused him to absent himself. But for the circumstance of the letter (written by Charles Channing on board the P. and O. steamer, and posted at Marseilles) *not* having been handed to Arthur, it might have been assumed that it had contained bad news of Charles, and that Arthur had hastened away to him. As the letter was omitted to be given to him—and it was an exceedingly curious incident in the problem that it should so have fallen out so—this hope could not be entertained: Charles was well; and by that time, no doubt, in Paris enjoying himself. But, even had circumstances enabled them to take up this hope, it could not have lasted long: had Arthur been called suddenly away, to Charles, or elsewhere, he would not have failed to let his friends know it.

His portmanteau remained at the hotel unsought for; with his umbrella and small parcel, containing the few articles he had bought earlier in the night; full proof that when he quitted the hotel, he had meant to return to it. Now and again, even yet, a letter would reach the hotel from some stray individual or other, whom he ought to have seen on business during his sojourn in London, and had not. The letters, like the luggage, remained unclaimed, except by Hamish.

In reply to enquiries, Mr. Galloway stated that the amount of money, brought up to town by Arthur from himself, was sixty pounds; chiefly in five-pound notes. This was, of course, exclusive of what Arthur might have about him of his own. Mr. Galloway, in regard to

the transmission of money, seemed to do things like nobody else: who, save himself, but would have given Arthur an order on his London bankers, Glyn and Co.? Not he. He happened to have the sixty pounds by him, and so sent it up in hard cash.

The first thing the police did, upon being summoned to the search, was to endeavour to ascertain what letters Arthur had received that night upon entering the hotel in Norfolk Street, and who they were from. The waiter said there were either four or five; he was not sure which, but thought the former. He fancied there had been five in all, and, as the one was accidentally left in the rack, it must, he felt nearly sure, have been but four he delivered over. One of them—he was positive of this—had arrived that same evening, only an hour or two before Mr. Arthur Channing. The young person who presided over the interests of a kind of office, or semi-public parlour, where enquiries were made by visitors, and whence orders were issued, was a Miss Whiffin. She was an excessively smart lady in a rustling silk, with frizzly curls of a light tow on the top of her forehead, and a remarkable chignon behind that might have been furnished by the coiffeur of Mrs. Bede Greateorex. Miss Whiffin could not, or would not, recollect what number of letters there had been waiting for Mr. Channing. Being a supercilious young lady—or, at least, doing her best to appear one—she assumed to think it a piece of impertinence to be questioned at all. Yes, she remembered there were a small few letters waiting for Mr. Arthur Channing; foreign or English; *she* did not notice which: if Binns said it was five, no doubt it *was* five. She considered it exceedingly unreasonable of any customer, not to say ungentlemanly, to write and order a bed-room, and walk into the house and then walk out again, and never occupy it: it was a thing she neither understood, nor had been accustomed to.

And that was all that could be got out of Miss Whiffin. Binns' opinion, that the number of letters given to Arthur had been four, was in a degree borne out: for that was just the number they had been able to trace as having been written to him. Three of them were notes from people in London, making appointments for Arthur to call on them the next day; the fourth (the one spoken of by Binns as having arrived just before Arthur himself), was known to be from Mr. Galloway, that gentleman having despatched it by the day-mail from Helstonleigh.

What could have taken Arthur out again? That was the point to be, if possible, solved. Unless it could be, neither the police nor anybody else had the smallest clue as to the quarter their enquiries should be directed to. Had he quitted London again (which seemed highly improbable), then the railway stations must be visited for news of him: had he but strolled out for a walk, it must be the streets.

One of the three notes, mentioned, came from a firm of proctors in

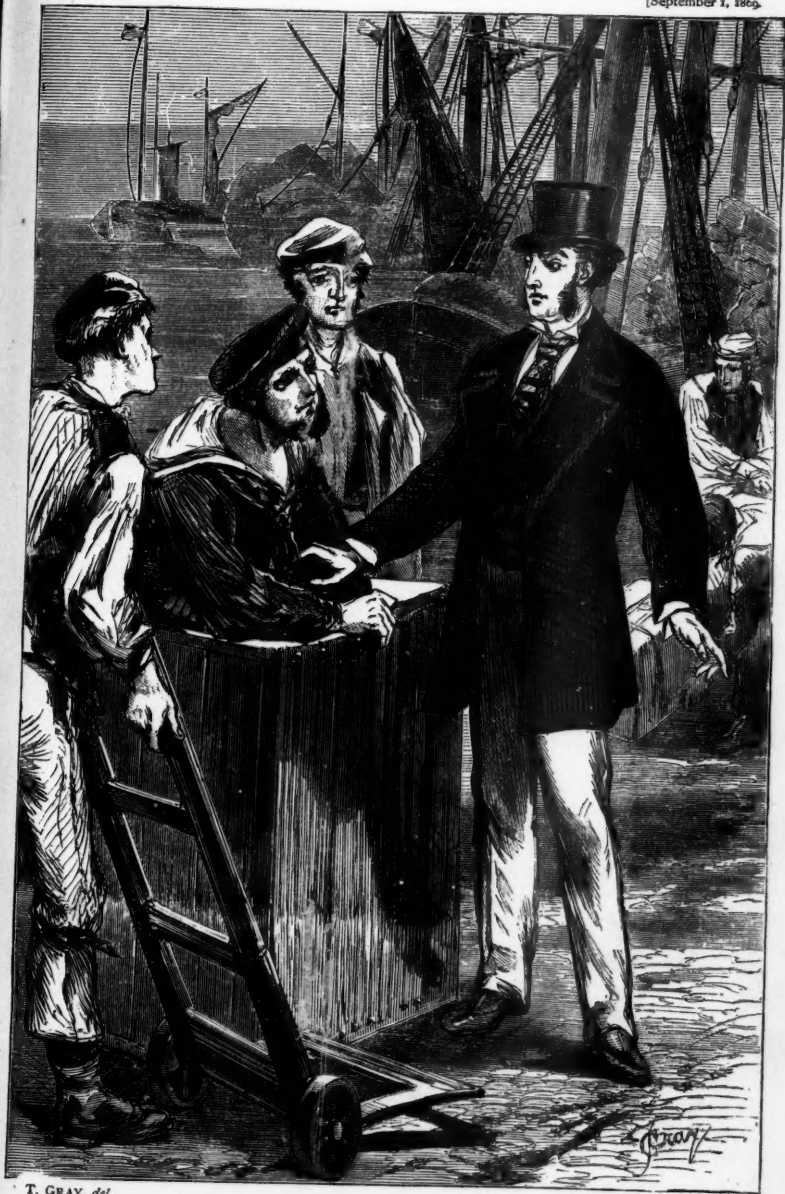
Parliament Street. It contained these words from the senior partner, who was an old friend of Mr. Galloway's:—"If it were convenient for you to call on me the evening of your arrival in town, I should be glad, as I wish to see you myself, and I am leaving home the following morning for a week. I shall remain at the office until nine at night, on the chance that you may come."

That Arthur, on reading the note, might have hastened out to make the call in Parliament Street, was more than probable.—He knew London fairly well, having been up on two previous occasions for Mr. Galloway.—But Arthur never made his appearance there. Though of course that did not prove that he did not set out with the intention of going. Another feasible conjecture, started by Roland Yorke, was, that he might have forgotten some trifling article or other amidst his previous purchases, and gone out again to get it. Allowing that one or other of these suppositions was correct, it did not explain the mystery of his subsequent disappearance.

What became of him? If, according to this theory, he walked, or ran, up Norfolk Street to the Strand, and turned to the right or the left, or bore on across the road, in pursuance of his purposed way, wherever that might be, how far did he go on that way? Where had his steps halted? at what point had he turned aside? How and where and in what manner had he disappeared? It was in truth a strange mystery, and none were able to answer the questions. A thousand times a day Roland declared he had been murdered—but that assertion was not looked upon as a satisfactory answer.

Upon a barrel, which happened to stand, end upwards, in a corner of an outer office at one of the police stations, into which he had gone dashing with dishevelled hair and agitated mien, sat Roland Yorke. Six days of search had gone by, and this was the seventh. With every morning that rose and brought forth no news of Arthur, Roland's state of mind grew worse and worse. The police for miles round were beginning to dread him, for he bothered their lives out. The shops in the Strand could say nearly the same. When it was found beyond doubt that Arthur was really missing, Roland had gone to the shops ringing and knocking frantically, just as he had at Mrs. Jones's door, and bursting into those accessible. It happened to be evening. for a whole day was wasted in inquiring at more likely places, proctors' and solicitors' offices, Gerald's chambers, and the like: and so a great many of the shops were closed. Into all that he could get, dashed Roland, asking for news of a gentleman; a "very handsome young fellow nearly as tall as himself, who might have gone in to buy something." Every conceivable article, displayed or not displayed for sale, did Roland's vivid imagination picture as having possibly been needed by Arthur, from "candied rock" at a sweet-stuff mart to a stomach-pump at the doctor's. Some, serving behind the counters, thought him





T. GRAY, del.

Roland Yorke searching the London Docks.

E. EVANS, sc.



mad; others that he might have designs upon the till; all threatened to give him into custody. In the excited state of Roland's mind it was not to be expected that he could tell a quiet, coherent tale. When Hamish Channing went later, with his courteous explanation and calm bearing, though his inward anxiety was quite as great as Roland's, it was a different thing altogether, and he was received with the utmost consideration. Threats and denial availed not with Roland; day by day, as each day came round, the shops had him again. In he was, like a man that stood head downwards and had no mind left; begging them to *try* and recall every soul who might have gone in to make purchases that night. But the shops could not help him. And, as the days went on, and nothing came of it, Roland began to lay the fault on the police.

"I never heard of such a thing," he was saying this morning as he sat tilting on the high barrel, and wiping his hot face after his run; which might have been one of twelve miles, or so, comprising Scotland Yard, and in and out of every shop in the Strand and Fleet Street, and round all the docks and back again. "Six days since he was missing, and no earthly news of him discovered yet! Not as much as a *scrap* of a clue! Where's the use of a country's having its police at all, unless they can do better than that?"

He spoke in an injured tone; one that he would have liked to make angrily passionate. Roland's only audience was a solitary stout policeman, with a prominent, buttoned-up chest and red face, who stood with his back against the side of the mantle-piece, reading a newspaper.

"We have not had no clue to work upon, you see, Mr. Yorke," replied the man, who bore the euphonious name of Spitchcock, and was, so to say, on intimate terms with Roland, through being invaded by him so often.

"No skill, you mean, Spitchcock. I know what the English police are; had cause to know it, and the mistakes they make, years ago, long before I went to Port Natal. I could almost say, without being far from the truth, that it was the pig-headed, awful bungling of one of your lot that drove me to Africa."

"How was that, sir?"

"I'm not going to tell you. Sometimes I wish I had stayed out there; I should have been nearly as well off. What with not getting on, and being picked short up by having my dearest friend murdered and flung over Waterloo Bridge—for that's what it will turn out to be—things don't look bright over here. I know this much, Spitchcock: if it had happened in Port Natal, he would have been found ere this—dead or alive."

"Yes, that must be a nice place, that must, by your description of it, sir," remarked Spitchcock with disparagement, as he turned his newspaper.

"It was nicer than this is just now, at any rate," returned Roland. "I never heard at Port Natal of a gentleman being pounced upon and murdered as he walked quietly along the public street at half-past eight o'clock in the evening. Such a villainous thing didn't happen when I was there."

"You've got to hear it of London yet, Mr. Yorke."

"Now don't *you* be pig-headed, Spitchcock. What else, do you suppose, could have happened to him? I can't say he was actually murdered in the open Strand: but I do say he must have been drawn into one of the alleys, or some other miserable place, with a pitch-plaster on his mouth, or chloroform to his nose, and there done for. Who is to know that he did not open his pocket-book in the train, coming up, and some thief caught sight of the notes, and dodged him? Come, Spitchcock?"

"He'd be safe enough in the Strand," remarked the man.

"Oh, would he though!" fiercely rejoined Roland, panting with emotion and heat. "Who is to know then but he had to dive into some bad places where the thieves live, to do an errand for old Gallo-way, or pay away one of his notes—and went out at once to do it? Do you mean to say that's unlikely?"

"No, that's not unlikely. If he had to do anything of the sort that took him into the thieves' alleys, that's how he might have come to grief," avowed Mr. Spitchcock. "Many a one gets put out of the way during a year, and no bones is made over it."

Roland jumped up with force so startling that he nearly upset the barrel. "That's how it must have been, Spitchcock! What can I do in it? I never cared for any one in the world as I cared for him, and never shall. Except—except somebody else—and that's nothing to anybody."

"But this here's altogether another guess sort of thing," remonstrated Mr. Spitchcock. "Them cases don't get found out through the party not being inquired for: his friends, if he's got any, thinks he's, may be, gone off on the spree, abroad or somewhere, and never asks after him. *This* is different."

He spoke in a cool calm kind of way. It produced no effect on Roland. The fresh theory had been started, and that was enough. So many conjectures had been hazarded and rejected in their hopelessness during the past few days, that to catch hold of another was to Roland something like a spring of water would have been, had he come upon one during his travels in the arid deserts of Africa. Ordering Spitchcock to propound this view to the first of his superiors that should look in, Roland went speeding on his course again to seek an interview with Hamish Channing.

Making a detour, first of all, down Wellington Street: for, to go by Waterloo Bridge without inquiring whether anything had "turned up,"

was beyond Roland. Perhaps it was because Arthur seemed to have disappeared within the radius of what might be called its vicinity, taken in conjunction with its assumed ill-reputation—as a convenient medium over which dead cats and the like might be pitched into the safe, all-concealing river—that induced Roland Yorke to suspect the spot. It haunted his thoughts awake, his dreams asleep. One whole night he had sat on its parapet, watching the water below, watching the solitary passengers above. The police had got to know him now and what he wanted; and if they laughed at him behind his back, were civil to him before his face.

Onward pressed Roland, his head first in eagerness, his long legs skimming after. How many wayfarers and apple-stalls he had knocked over (so to say, walked through) since the search began, he would have had some difficulty to reckon up. As to bringing him to account for damages, that was simply impracticable. Before the capsized individual could understand what had happened to him, or the bewildered apple-woman so much as looked at her fallen wares, Roland was out of sight and hearing. A young shoe-black at the corner had got to think the gentleman, pressing onwards everlastingly up and down the street, never turning aside from his course, might be the Wandering Jew; and would cease brushing to gaze up at Roland whenever he passed.

Look at him now, reader. The tall, fine, well-dressed young fellow, his pale face anxious with not-attempted-to-be-concealed-care, his arms swaying, the silk-lined breasts of his superfine frock-coat thrown back, as he strides on resolutely down Wellington Street! Neither to the right nor the left looks he: his eyes are cast forth over the people's heads, towards the bridge and the river that it spans, as if staring for the information he is going to seek. One great feature in Roland was his hopefulness. Each time he started for Waterloo Bridge, or Scotland Yard, or Hamish Channing's, or Mr. Greator's, or any other place where news might possibly be awaiting him, renewed hope was to the full as buoyant in his heart as it had been that memorable day when he had anchored in the beautiful harbour off Port Natal, and gazed on the fair shore with all its charming scenery, that seemed to Roland as a very paradise. Bright with hope as his heart had been then, so was it now in the intermittent intervals. So was it at this moment as he bore on, down Wellington Street.

"Well," said he to the toll-keeper. "Anything turned up?"

"Not a bit on't," responded the man. "Nor likely to."

Roland went through, perched himself on the parapet, and took his fill of gazing at the river. Now on this side, now leaping over to that. A steamer passed, a rowing-boat or two; but Arthur Channing was not in them. Roland looked to the mud on the sides, he threw his gaze forwards and backwards, up and down, round and about. In vain. All features were very much the same that they had been from the day of



his first search: certainly, returning to him no signs of Arthur. And down went hope again, as completely as the pears had gone, earlier in the day, at a corner stall. Despair had possession of him now.

"You say that no suspicious character went on to the bridge that night, so far as you can recollect," resumed Roland in the gloomiest tone, when he had walked lingeringly back to the man at the gate. Lingeringly, because some kind of clue seemed to lie with that bridge and he was always loth to quit it. If he did not suspect Arthur might be lying buried underneath the stone pavement, it seemed something like it.

"I didn't say so," interrupted the gate-keeper, in rather a surly tone. "What I said was, as there warn't nothing suspicious chucked over that night."

"You can't tell. You might not hear."

"Well, I haven't got no time to jabber with you to-day."

"If I kept this turnstile, I should make it my business to mark all suspicious night characters that went through; and watch them."

"Oh, would you! And how 'ud you know which was the suspicious ones? Come! They don't always carry their bad marks on their backs, they don't; some on 'em don't look no different from you."

Roland bit his lips to keep down a retort. All in Arthur's interests. Upon giving the man, on a recent visit, what the latter had called "sauce," his migration on and off the bridge had been threatened with a summary stoppage. So he was careful.

"Well, I've just had a clue given me by the police. And I don't hold the smallest doubt now that he *was* put out of the way. And this is the likeliest place for him to have been brought to. I don't think it would take much skill, after he was chloroformed to death, to shoot him over, out of a Hansom cab: brought up upon the pavement, level with the parapet, he'd go as easily over, if propelled, as I should if I jumped it."

The toll-keeper answered by a growl and some sharp words. Truth to say, he felt personally aggrieved at his bridge being subjected to these scandalizing suspicions, and resented them accordingly. Roland did not wait. He went off in search of Hamish, and ere he had left the bridge behind out of sight, hope began again to spring up within him. So buoyant is the human heart in general, and Roland's in particular. Not—let it always be understood—the hope that Arthur would be found uninjured, only some news of him that might serve to solve the mystery.

Shooting out of a Hansom cab (not dead, after the manner of a picture just drawn, but alive) came a gentleman, just as Roland was passing it. The cab had whirled round the corner of Wellington Street, probably on its way from the station, and pulled up at a shop in the Strand. It was Sir Vincent Yorke. Roland stopped; seized his

hand in his impulsive manner, and began entering upon the story of Arthur Channing's disappearance without the smallest preliminary greeting of any kind. Every moment Roland could spare from running, he spent in talking. He talked to Mrs. Jones, he talked to Henry William Ollivera, he talked to Hurst and Jenner, he would have talked to the moon. Mr. Brown had been obliged to forbid him the office, unless he could come to it to work. In his rapid, excited manner, he poured forth the story, circumstance after circumstance, in Sir Vincent's ear, that gentleman feeling slightly bewildered, and not best pleased at the unexpected arrest.

"Oh—ah—I dare say he'll turn up all right," minced Sir Vincent. "A fella's not obliged to acquaint his friends with his movements. Just got up to town?—ah—yes—just for a day or two. Good day. Hope you'll find him."

"You don't understand who it is, Vincent," spoke Roland, resenting the want of interest; which, to say the best of it, was but luke-warm. "It is William Yorke's brother-in-law, Annabel's brother, and the dearest friend I've ever had in life. I've told you of Arthur Channing before. He has the best and bravest heart living; he is the truest man and gentleman the world ever produced."

"Ah—yes—good day! I'm in a hurry."

Sir Vincent made his escape into the shop. Roland went on to Hamish Channing's office. Hamish could not neglect his work, however Roland might abandon his.

But Hamish would have liked to do it. In good truth, this most unaccountable disappearance of his brother was rendering him in a measure unfit for its duties. He might almost as well have devoted his whole time just now to the interests of the search, for his thoughts were with it always, and his interruptions were many. To him the police carried reports; it was on him Roland Yorke rattled in half a dozen times in the course of the day, upsetting all order and quiet, and business too, by the commotion he raised. To see Roland burst in, breath gone, hair awry, face white, chest heaving with emotion, was nothing at all extraordinary; but Hamish did wish, as the doors swung back after Roland once more, on this morning, that he would not burst in quite so often. Perhaps Roland was a little more excited than usual, from the full belief that he had at length got hold of the right clue.

"It's all out, Hamish," he panted. "Arthur's as good as found. He went out of the hotel to do some errand for Galloway; it took him into those bad, desperate pick-pocketing places where the police dare hardly go themselves, and that's where it must have been done."

Hamish laid down his pen. The colour deserted his face, a faintness stole over his heart.

"How has it been discovered, Roland?" he inquired, in a hushed tone.

"Spitchcock did it. You know the fellow—red face, fat enough for two. I was with him just now; and in consequence of what he said, it's the conclusion I have come to."

Naturally, Hamish pressed for details. Upon Roland's supplying them, with accuracy as faithful as his state of mind allowed, Hamish knew not whether to be most relieved or vexed. Roland had neither wish nor thought to deceive; and his positive assertion was made only in accordance with the belief he had worked himself into. To find that the present "clue," as Roland called it, turned out to be but a suppositious one of that impulsive gentleman's mind, on a par with the theory that he entertained in regard to Waterloo Bridge, was a relief undoubtedly to Hamish; but, nevertheless, he would have preferred Roland's keeping the whole to himself.

"I wish you'd not take up these fancies, Roland," he said, as severely as his sweet nature ever allowed him to speak. "It is so useless to bring me unnecessary alarms."

"You may take my word for it that's how it will turn out to have been, Hamish."

"No. Had Mr. Galloway charged him with any commission to unsafe parts that night—or to safe ones, either—he would have written up since to tell me."

"Oh, would he though!" cried Roland, wiping his hot brow. "You don't know Galloway as I do, Hamish. He's just likely to have given such a commission (if he had it to give) and to think no more about it. Somebody ought to go to Helstonleigh."

Hamish made no reply to this. He was busy with his papers.

"Will you go, Hamish?"

"To Helstonleigh? Certainly not. There is not the slightest necessity for it. I am quite certain that Mr. Galloway holds no clue that he has not imparted."

"Then, if nobody goes down, I will go," said Roland, his eyes lighting with earnestness, his cheeks flushing. "I never thought to show myself in Helstonleigh again until fortune had altered with me; but I'd despise myself if I could let my own feelings of shame stand in old Arthur's light."

"Don't do anything of the kind," advised Hamish. "Believe me, Roland, it is altogether an ideal notion you have taken up. Your impulsive nature deceives you."

"I shall go, Hamish. I am not obliged to carry your consent with me."

"I should not give it," said Hamish, slightly laughing, but speaking in an unmistakably firm accent.

He was interrupted by a hacking cough. As Roland watched him, waiting until it should cease, watched the hectic colour it left behind it, a sudden recollection came over him of *one* who used to cough in much the same way before he died.

"I say, old fellow, you've caught cold," he said.

"No, I think not."

"I'd get rid of that cough, Hamish. It makes me think of Joe Jenkins. Don't be offended: I'm not comparing you together. He was the thinnest and poorest lamp-post going, a miserable reed in the hands of Mrs. J.; and you are bright, handsome, fastidious Hamish Channing. But you cough alike."

With the last words Roland went dashing out. When he had a purpose in view, head and heels were alike impetuous, and perhaps no earthly power, unless it had been the appearance of Arthur, could have arrested him in the end he had in view—that of starting for Helstonleigh.

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### CHAPTER XXX.

#### A NEW IDEA FOR MR. OLLIVERA.

THE Reverend Henry William Ollivera sat in his room at a late breakfast; he had been called abroad to a sick parishioner just as he was about to sit down to it at nine in the morning. With his usual abandonment of self, he hastened away, swallowing down a thimbleful of coffee, without milk or sugar, and carrying with him a crust of bread. It was nearly one when he came back again, having taken a morning service for a friend, and this was his real breakfast. Mrs. Jones, who cared for the comforts of the people about her in her tart way, had sent up what she called buttered eggs, a slice of ham, and a hot roll. The table-cloth was beautifully white; the coffee-pot, of albata-plate, looked as good as silver.

But, tempting as the meal really was, hungry as Mr. Ollivera might be supposed to be, he was letting it get cold before him. A newspaper lay on the pretty stand near, but he did not unfold it. The strangely eager light in his eyes was very conspicuous as he sat, seeing nothing, lost in a reverie; the fevered hands were still. Some months had elapsed now since his wild anxiety, to unfold the mystery enshrouding his brother's death, had set-in afresh, through the disclosure of Mr. Willett; a burning, restless anxiety, that never seemed wholly to quit his mind, by night or by day.

But nothing had come of it. Seek as Mr. Ollivera would, he as yet obtained no result. An exceedingly disagreeable and curious doubt had crossed his thoughts at times—whence arising he scarcely knew—of one whom he would have been very unwilling to suspect, even though the adverse appearances were greater than at present. And that was Alletha Rye. Perhaps what first of all struck him as strange, was Miss Rye's ill-concealed agitation upon any mention of the subject,

her startling change of colour, her shrinking desire to avoid it. At the time of Mr. Willett's communication the clergyman had renewed his habit of going into Mrs. Jones's parlour to converse upon the topic; previously he had been letting it slip into disuse, and then it was that the remarkable demeanour of Miss Rye dawned gradually on his notice. At first he thought it an accident, next he decided that it was strange, afterwards he grew to introduce the topic suddenly on purpose to observe her. And what he saw was beginning to make a most unpleasant impression on him. A very slight occurrence, only the unexpected meeting of Mr. Butterby that morning, had brought the old matter all back to him. As he was hastening home from church, really wanting his breakfast, he encountered Jonas Butterby the detective. The latter said he had been in town for nearly a week on business (the reader saw him at its commencement, in conjunction with Mr. Bede Greatorrex), but was returning to Helstonleigh that night or on the morrow. For a few minutes they stood conversing of the past, Butterby saying that nothing had "turned up."

"Have you not heard of Godfrey Pitman?" suddenly asked Mr. Ollivera.

The question was put sharply: and for once the clever man was at fault. Did Mr. Ollivera mean to imply that he *had* heard of Pitman?—that he, the clergyman, was aware that he had heard? Or, was it but a simple question? In the uncertainty, Mr. Butterby made a pause, evidently in some kind of doubt or hesitation, and glanced keenly at the questioner from under his eyebrows. Mr. Ollivera marked it all.

"Have you heard of him, then?"

"The way that folks's thoughts get wandering!" exclaimed Butterby, with a charming air of innocence. "Pitman, says you: if I wasn't a running of my head on that other man—Willett. And *he* has got an attack of the shivers from drinking; that's the last gazetted news of him, sir. As to that Godfrey Pitman—the less we say about him, the better, unless we could say it to some purpose. Good morning, Reverend Sir; I've got my work cut out for me to-day."

"One moment," said Mr. Ollivera, detaining him. "I want your opinion upon a question I am going to ask. Could a woman, think you, have killed my brother?"

Perhaps the question was so unexpected as slightly to startle even the detective. Instead of answering it, his green eyes shot out another keen glance at Mr. Ollivera, and they did not quit his face again. The latter supposed he was not understood.

"I mean, could a woman, think you, have had the physical strength and courage to fire the pistol?"

"Do you ask me that, sir, because you suspect one?"

"I cannot say I go so far as to *suspect* one. It has occurred to me



latterly as being within the range of possibility. I wish you would answer my question, Mr. Butterby?"

"In course, from the point you put it, it might have been a woman just as well as a man; some women be every bit as strong, and a sight bolder," was Mr. Butterby's answer. "But I can't wait, sir, now," he added, as he turned away, and said Good morning once more.

"It was queer, his asking that," very softly repeated Mr. Butterby, between his lips, as he walked on at a quicker pace than usual.

Mr. Ollivera got home with his head full of this; and, as usual under the circumstances, was letting his late breakfast grow cold before him. Mrs. Jones, entering the room on some domestic errand, gave him the information that Roland Yorke had just come in in a fine state of commotion (which was nothing unusual), saying Arthur Channing was as good as found, that is, found murdered; and that he was, in consequence, off to Helstonleigh. Before Mr. Ollivera, setting to his breakfast then, with a will, could get downstairs, Roland had gone skimming out again. So the clergyman turned his steps to the house of Greatorex and Greatorex.

It could not be but that the singular and prolonged disappearance of Arthur Channing should be exciting commotion in the public mind. Though it had not been made, so to say, a public matter, at least a portion of the public knew of it. The name did not appear in the papers; but the "mysterious disappearance of a gentleman" was becoming quite a treasure to the news-compilers. Greatorex and Greatorex had taken it up warmly, as much from real, intrinsic interest in the affair itself, as that Annabel was an inmate of their house. Arthur Channing had stood, unsolicited, over John Ollivera's grave at the stealthy midnight burial service; and Mr. Greatorex did not forget it. He had offered his services at once to Hamish Channing. "We have," he said, "a wide experience of London life, and will do for you in it all that can be done." Bede, though kindly anxious, wished the matter could be set at rest, for it was costing him a clerk. Roland candidly avowed that he was no more fit for his work at present, than he would be to rule the patients in St. Luke's; and Bede privately believed this was only truth. Little Jenner was home again, and took Roland's work as well as his own.

One very singular phase of the attendant surroundings was this—so many people appeared to be missing. The one immediately in question, Arthur Channing, was but a unit in the number. Scarcely an hour in the day passed but the police either received voluntary news of somebody's disappearance; or, through their enquiries after Arthur, gained it for themselves. If space allowed, and this paper were the proper medium for it, a most singularly interesting account might be given of these facts, every word of which would be true.

Henry Ollivera found Mr. Greatorex in the dining-room finishing his

luncheon. In point of fact it was his dinner, for he was going out of town that afternoon and would not be home until late. Bede, who rarely took luncheon, though he sometimes made a pretence of going up for it, was biting morsels off a hard biscuit, as he stood against the wall by the mantel-piece, near the handsome pier-glass that in his days of vanity he had been so fond of glancing in. Mrs. Bede Greatorex was at table; also the little girl, Jane, whose dinner it was. The board was extravagantly spread, displaying fish and fowl and other delicacies, and Mrs. Bede was solacing herself with a pint of sparkling hock, which stood at her elbow. She looked flushed: at least, as much so as a made-up face can look, and in her eyes there shone an angry light: perhaps at the non-appearance of two visitors she had expected, perhaps because she had just come from one of her violent-tempered attacks on Miss Channing. Mr. Greatorex, like his son Bede, did not appear to appreciate the good things: he was making his dinner off one plain dish and a glass of pale ale.

"You will sit down and take some, William."

Mr. Ollivera declined; he had but just swallowed his breakfast. From the absence of Miss Channing at the table, he drew an augury that the ill news spoken of by Mrs. Jones must be correct. But Mr. Greatorex said he was not aware of anything fresh; and a smile crossed his lips upon hearing that Roland was the author of the report. Bede laughed outright.

"If you only knew how often he has come in, startling us with extraordinary tales, you'd have learnt by this time what faith to put in Roland Yorke," said Bede. "A man more sensitively nervous than he is, or ever will be, would have had brain-fever with all this talking and walking and mental excitement."

"He says, I understand, that he is going down to Helstonleigh, to get some information from Mr. Galloway," said the clergyman.

"Oh, is he? As good go there as stay here, for all the work he does. He'd start for the moon if there were a road to convey him to it."

"I wonder you give him so much holiday, Bede," remarked Mr. Ollivera.

"He takes it," answered Bede. "He is of very little use at his best, but we don't choose to discharge him, or in fact make any change until Lord Carrick comes over, who may be expected shortly. I believe one thing—that he tries to do his utmost: and Brown puts up with him."

"Do you know," began Mr. Ollivera, in a low, meaning tone, when the door closed upon the luncheon-tray, and the three gentlemen stood round the fire, Mrs. Bede having taken herself to a far-off window, "I have half a mind to go to Helstonleigh myself."

"In search of Arthur Channing, William?"

"No, uncle. In quest of that other search that has been upon my

mind so long. An idea has forced itself upon me lately that it—might have been a woman."

"For heaven's sake, drop it," exclaimed Bede, with strange agitation. "Don't you see Louisa?"

She could not have heard—but Bede was always thus. He had his reasons for never allowing it to be spoken of before her. One of them was this: In the days gone by, just before their marriage, Clare Joliffe, suddenly introducing the subject of Mr. Ollivera's death, when Bede was present, said to her sister in a tone between jest and earnest, that she (Louisa) had been the cause of it. Clare meant no more than that her conduct had caused him to end his life—as it was supposed he did. But Louisa, partly with passion, had gone into a state of agitation so great as to alarm Bede. Never, from that time, would he suffer it to be mentioned before her if he could guard against it.

"But, William, what do you mean about a woman?" asked Mr. Greateorex, dropping his voice to a lower key.

"Uncle Greateorex, I cannot explain myself. I must go on in my own way, until the time to speak shall come. That the clearance of the past is rapidly advancing I feel sure of. A subtle instinct whispers it to me. My dreams tell it me. Forget for the present what I said. I ought not to have spoken."

"You are visionary as usual," said Bede, sarcastically.

"I know that you always think me so," was the clergyman's answer, as he turned to depart.

There was a general dispersion. Only Mr. Greateorex remained in the room: and he had fallen into deep thought: when Roland Yorke, in his chronic state of excitement dashed in. Without any ceremony he flung himself into a chair.

"Mr. Greateorex, I am nearly dead-beat. What with cutting about perpetually, and meeting depressing disappointments, and catching up horrible new fears, it's enough to wear a fellow out, sir."

Roland looked it: dead-beat. He had plenty of strength; but it would not stand this much overtaxing. In the last six days it may be questioned if he had sat down, with the exception of coming to a temporary anchor on upright barrels or parapets of bridges; and then he and his legs were so restless from excitement that a spectator would have thought he was afflicted with St. Vitus's Dance.

"Been taking a round this morning, as usual, I suppose, Mr. Yorke," said the lawyer.

"Ever so many of them, sir. I began with the docks: I can't help thinking that if anything was done with Arthur in conjunction with a carpet-bag, he might turn up there, after drifting down. Then I walked back to Scotland Yard, then looked into a few police-stations. Next I went to Waterloo Bridge, then down to Hamish Channing's, then back to Mrs. Jones's; then to Vincent Yorke's; and now I'm come here

to tell you I'm going down to Helstonleigh, if you don't mind sparing me."

If you don't mind sparing me! For the use he was of to the house, it did not matter whether he went or stayed. But that Roland had improved in mind and manners, he had surely not asked it. Time was when he had gone off on a longer journey than the one to Helstonleigh and never said to his master With your leave or by your leave; but just quitted the office *impromptu*, leaving his compliments as a legacy.

"And if you please I'd like to see Miss Channing before I start, sir; to tell her what I'm doing, and to ask if she has any messages for her people."

Mr. Greatorex rang the bell. He fancied Miss Channing might be out, as she had not appeared at luncheon.

Not out, but in her bedroom. The pretty bedroom with its window-curtains of chintz and its tasty furniture. When gaiety or discord reigned below, when Mrs. Bede Greatorex's temper tried her as with a heavy cross, Annabel could come up here and find it a sure refuge. In one of the outbreaks of violence that seemed to be almost like insanity, Mrs. Bede had that morning attacked Miss Channing—and for no earthly reason. There are such tempers, there are such women in the world. Some of us know it too well.

Weeping, trembling, Annabel gained her chamber, and there sobbed out her heart. It had needed no additional grief to-day, for Arthur's strange disappearance filled it with a heavy, shrinking, terrible weight. Jane ran up to say luncheon was ready—their dinner; Annabel replied that she could not eat any. Taking the child in her arms, kissing her with many gentle kisses, she whispered a charge not to mention what had passed: if grandpapa or uncle Bede happened to remark on her absence from table, Jane might say she had a headache, and it would be perfectly true, for her head did ache sadly. It was ever thus; even Mrs. Bede Greatorex she endeavoured to screen from condemnation. Trained to goodness; to return good for evil whenever it was practicable; to *bear* sweetly and patiently, Annabel Channing strove to carry out certain holy precepts in every action of her daily life. Too many of us keep them for the church and the closet. Annabel had learnt the one only way. Praying ever, as she had been taught from childhood, for the Holy Spirit spoken of by Jesus Christ to make its home in her heart, and direct and restrain her always, she certainly knew the way to Peace as well as it can be known here; and practised it. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

But it was hard to bear. Her nature was but human. There were times, as on this day, when she thought she could not endure it; that she must give up her situation. And that she was loth to do. Loth for more reasons than one. Putting aside these trying outbreaks, the

place was desirable. She was regarded as an equal, treated as a lady, well paid: and, what weighed greatly with Annabel in her extreme conscientiousness, she was unwilling to abandon Jane Greatorrex. For she was doing the child *good*: good in the highest sense of the word. Left to some governesses (conscientious ones too in a moral and scholastic point of view) Jane would grow up a selfish, careless, utterly worldly woman: Annabel was ever patiently working by gentle degrees to lead her to wish to be something better; and she had begun to see a little light breaking in on her way. For this great cause she wished to remain: it seemed to be a duty to do so.

Drawing her desk towards her, she had sat down to write to her sister Constance, William Yorke's wife. Constance was her great resource. To her, when the world's troubles were pressing heavily, Annabel poured out her sorrow—never having hinted at any particular cause, only saying the situation “had its trials”—and Constance never failed to write by return of post an answer that cheered Annabel, and helped her on her way. The very fact of writing seemed often to do her good, as on this day, and the tears had dried on her cheeks, and her face grew cheerful with hopeful resolution, as she folded the letter.

“I must balance the good I enjoy here against the trouble,” she said; “that will help me to bear it better. If Jane——”

She was interrupted by the young lady in question; who came running in, followed by one of the maids.

“Miss Channing, Roland Yorke wants to see you in the dining-room.”

“Roland Yorke!” repeated Annabel, dubiously. With all his lack of attention to conventionalities, Mr. Roland had never gone so far as to send up for her.

“It was Mr. Greatorrex who desired me to tell you, miss,” spoke up the servant, possibly thinking Miss Jane's news needed confirmation. “He rang to know whether you were at home, and then told me to come and say that Mr. Yorke wished to see you.”

Annabel smoothed down the folds of her grey silk dress, and looked to see that her pretty auburn hair was tidy. She saw something else; her swollen eyes, and the vivid blushes on her cheeks.

“I'll come with you,” whispered Miss Jane. “I'll tell him about Aunt Bede.”

And the conviction that she might tell, in spite of all injunction against it, startled Annabel. Roland was the young lady's prime favourite, regarded by her as a big playfellow.

“You cannot come with me, Jane. Mary, be so kind as to take Miss Jane to Dalla. Say that she must remain in the nursery until I am at liberty.”

Roland was alone in the dining-room when she entered it. With a



delicacy that really was to be commended in one so thoughtless, he would not tell her of the theory he had caught up, or why he was going to Helstonleigh; only that he was about to start for that city.

"But what are you going for, Roland?" was the very natural question that ensued.

"To see old Galloway," he replied, standing by her on the hearth-rug where Mr. Greatorex and Henry Ollivera had been standing but just before. "I think Galloway must have given—at least—that is—that he could find some clue to Arthur's movements, if he were well pumped, and I'm going to do it. Somebody ought to go; Hamish won't, and so it falls upon me."

Annabel made no answer.

"I shan't like appearing in the old place," he candidly resumed. "I said I never would until I could take a fortune with me; but one has to do lots of things in this world that go against the grain; one soon lives long enough to find that boasting turns out to be nothing but emptiness."

"Oh Roland!" she said, as the utter fallacy of the expectation struck upon her, "I fear it will be a lost journey. Had Mr. Galloway been able to furnish ever so small a clue, he would have been sure to send it without being asked."

"That's what Hamish says. But I mean to try. I'd be off to-day to the North Pole as soon as to Helstonleigh, if I thought it would find him. And to think, Annabel, that while he was being kept out of the way by fate or ruffians, I was calling him proud!—and neglectful!—and hard-hearted! I'll never forgive myself that. If, through lack of exertion on my part, he should not be found, I might expect his ghost to come back and stand at the foot of my bed every night."

"But—Roland—you have not given up all hope?" she questioned, her clear, honest hazel eyes cast up steadily and beseechingly at his.

"Well, I don't know. Sometimes I think he's sure to turn up all right, and then down I go again into the depths of mud. Last night I dreamt he was alive and well, and I was helping him up some perpendicular steps from a boat moored under Waterloo Bridge. When I awoke I thought it was true; oh! I was so glad! Even after I remembered, it seemed a good omen. Don't be down-hearted, Annabel. Once, at Port Natal, a fellow I knew was lost for a year. His name was Crow. We never supposed but what he was dead, but he came to life again with a good crop of red whiskers, and said he'd only been travelling. I say! What's the matter with your eyes?"

The sudden question rather confused her. Her face flushed all over.

"You've been crying, Annabel. Now, you tell me what it was. If Mrs. Bede Greatorex makes you unhappy—good gracious! and I can't help you, or take you out of here! I don't get on at all. It's enough to make a man swear."

"Hush, Roland! I am very unhappy about Arthur."

"Why, of course you are—how came I to forget it?" he rejoined, easily satisfied as a child. "And here am I, wasting the precious time that might be spent in going after him! Have you anything to send to Helstonleigh?"

"Only my love. My dear love to them all. You will see mamma?"

Roland suddenly took both her hands in his, and so held her before him, stooping his head a little, and speaking gently.

"Annabel, I shall have to see your mamma, and tell her ——"

She did not mean that at all; it had not so much as occurred to her. Naturally the cheeks became very vivid now. Without further ado, asking no leave, bold Roland kissed the blushing face.

"Good-bye, Annabel. Wish me luck."

Away he clattered, waiting for neither scolding nor answer, and was flying along the street below, before Annabel had at all recovered her equanimity.

To resolve to go to Helstonleigh was one thing, to get to it was another; and Roland Yorke, with his customary heedlessness, had not considered ways and means. It was only when he dashed in at his lodgings that morning (as, we have heard, was related by Mrs. Jones to Mr. Ollivera), that the question struck him how he was to get there. He had not a coin in the world. Roland's earnings (the result of having put his shoulder to the wheel these three or four past months) had been deposited for safety with Mrs. Jones, it may be remembered, and they amounted to two sovereigns. These had been spent in the search after Arthur. In the first commotion of his disappearance, Roland had wildly dashed about in Hansoms; for his legs, with all their length and impatience, would not carry him from pillar to post fleet enough. He made small presents to policemen, hoping to sharpen their discovering powers; he put two advertisements in the *Times*, offering rewards for mysterious carpet-bags. But that a fortunate oversight caused him to omit appending any address, it was quite untellable the number of old bags that might have been brought him. All this had speedily melted the gold pieces. He then got Mrs. Jones to advance him (grumblingly) two more, which went the same way. So, there he was, without money to take him to Helstonleigh, and nobody that he knew of likely to lend him any.

"I can't walk," debated he, standing stock-still in his parlour, as his penniless state occurred to him. "They'd used to call it a hundred and eleven miles in the old coaching days. It would be nothing to me if I had the time, but I can't waste that now. Hamish has set his face against my going, or I'd ask him. I wonder—I wonder whether Dick Yorke would let me have a couple of pounds?"

To "wonder," meant to do, with Roland. Out he went again on the spur of the moment, and ran all the way to Portland Place. Sir Vin-

cent was not at home. The man said he had been there that morning on his arrival from Sunny Mead (the little Yorke homestead in Surrey), but had gone out again directly. He might be expected in at any moment or all moments during the day.

Roland waited. In a fine state of restlessness, as we may be sure, for the precious time was passing. He was afraid to go to the club lest he might miss him. When one o'clock had struck, Roland thought he might do his other errand first, which was to acquaint Greatorex and Greatorex with his departure, and see Miss Channing. Therefore, he started forth again, leaving a peremptory message for Sir Vincent if he returned, that he was to *wait in* for him.

And now, having seen Mr. Greatorex and Annabel, he was speeding back again. All breathless, and in a commotion, of course; driving along as if the pavement belonged to him, and nobody else had any claim to it. Charging round a corner at full tilt, he charged against an inoffensive foot-passenger, quietly approaching it: who was no other than Mr. Butterby.

Roland brought himself up. It was an opportunity not to be missed. Seizing hold of the official button-hole, he poured the story of Arthur Channing's disappearance into the official ear, imploring Mr. Butterby's good services in the cause.

"Don't you think any more of the uncivil names I've called you, Butterby. You knew all the while I didn't mean anything. I've said I'd pay you out when I got the chance, and so I *will*; but it shall be in gold. If you will only put your good services into the thing, we shall find him. Do, row! You won't bear malice, Butterby."

So impetuous had been the flow of words, that Mr. Butterby had found no opportunity of getting one in edgeways; he had simply looked and listened. Arthur Channing's loss had been as inexplicable to him as to other people.

"Arthur Channing ain't one of them sort o' blades likely to get into a mess, through going to places where drinking and what not's carried on," spoke he.

"*Of course* he is not," was Roland's indignant answer. "Arthur Channing drink! he'd be as likely to turn tumbler at a dancing-booth! Look here, Butterby: you did work him harm once, but I'll never reproach you with it again as long as I live, and I've known all along you had no ill-meaning in it: but now, you find him this time, and that will be tit for tat. Perhaps I may be rich some day, and I'll buy you a silver snuff-box set with diamonds."

"I don't take snuff," said Mr. Butterby.

But it was impossible to resist Roland's pleading, in all its simple-hearted energy. And, to give Mr. Butterby his due, he would have been glad to do his best to find Arthur Channing.

"I can't stay in London myself," said he, "I've been here a week

now on private business, and must go down to Helstonleigh to-morrow; but I'll put it special into Detective Jelf's hands. He's as 'cute an officer, young Mr. Yorke, as here and there one; and of more use in London than me."

"Bless you, Butterby!" cried hearty Roland; "tell Jelf I'll give him a snuff-box too. And now I'm off. I won't forget you, Butterby."

Mr. Butterby thought the chances that Roland would ever have tin snuff-boxes to give away, let alone silver, were rather poor; but he was not a bad-natured man, and he detained Roland yet an instant to give him a friendly word of advice.

"There's one or two folks, in the old place, that you owe a trifle to, Mr. Yorke——"

"There's half a dozen," interrupted candid Roland.

"Well, sir, I'd not show myself in the town more than I could help. They are vexed at being kept out of their money, thinking some of the family might have paid it; and they might let off a bit if you went amid 'em: unless, indeed, you are taking down the money with you."

"Taking the money with me!—why, Butterby, I've not got a sixpence in the world," avowed Roland, opening his surprised eyes. "If Dick Yorke won't lend me a pound or so, I don't know how on earth to get down, unless they let me have a free pass on the top of the engine."

There was no time for more. Away he went to Portland Place, and thundered at the door as if he had been a king. But his visit did not serve him.

Sir Vincent Yorke had entered just after Roland departed. Upon receiving the peremptory message, the baronet marvelled what it could mean, and whether all the Yorke family had been blown up, save himself. Nothing else, he thought, could justify the scapegoat Roland in desiring him, Sir Vincent, to *stay in*. To be kept waiting at home when he very particularly wanted to be out—for Sir Vincent had come to town to meet the lady he was shortly to marry—Miss Trehern—made him frightfully cross. So that when Roland re-appeared he had an angry-tempered man to deal with.

And, in good truth, had Roland announced the calamity, so pleasantly anticipated, it would have caused Sir Vincent less surprise; certainly less vexation. When he found he had been decoyed into staying in for nothing but to be asked to lend money to take Mr. Roland careering off somewhere by rail—he was in too great a passion to understand where—Sir Vincent exploded. Roland, quietly braving the storm, prayed for "just a pound," as if he were praying for his life. Sir Vincent finally replied that he'd not lend him a shilling if it would save him from hanging.

So Roland was thrown on his beam ends, and went back to Mrs. Jones's with empty pockets, revolving ways and means in his mind.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## MR. GALLOWAY INVADDED.

It was night in the old cathedral town. The ten o'clock bell had rung, and Mr. Galloway, proctor and surrogate, at home in his residence in the Boundaries, was thinking he might prepare to go to rest. For several days he had been feeling very much out of sorts; and this evening the symptoms had culminated in what seemed a bad cold, attended with feverishness and pain in all his limbs. The old proctor was one of those people whose mind insensibly sways the body; and the mysterious disappearance of Arthur Channing was troubling him to sickness. He had caused a huge fire to be made up in his bed-room, and was seated by it, groaning; his slippered feet on a warm cushion, a railway-rug enveloping his coat, and back, and shoulders; a white cotton night-cap, with a hanging tassel, ornamenting gracefully his head. One of his servants had just brought up a basinful of hot gruel, holding at least a quart, and put it on the stand by his easy-chair. Mr. Galloway was groaning at the gruel as much as with pain, for he hated gruel like poison.

Thinking it might be less nauseous disposed of at an unbroken draught, were that possible—or at least soonest over—Mr. Galloway caught up the basin and put it to his lips. With a cry and a splutter, down went the basin again. The stuff was scalding hot. And whether Mr. Galloway's tongue, or teeth, or temper suffered most, he would have been puzzled to confess.

It was at this untoward moment—Mr. Galloway's face turning purple and himself choking and coughing—that a noise, as of thunder, suddenly awoke the echoes of the Boundaries. Shut up in his snug room, hearing sounds chiefly through the windows, the startled Mr. Galloway wondered what it was, and edged his white night-cap off one ear to listen. He had then the satisfaction of discovering that the noise was at his own front door. Somebody had evidently got hold of the knocker (an appendage recently made to the former naked panels), and was rapping and rattling as if never intending to leave off. And now the bell-handle was pulled in accompaniment—as a chorus accompanies a song—and the alarmed household were heard flying towards the door from all quarters.

"Is it the fire-engine?" groaned Mr. Galloway, to himself. "I didn't hear it come up."

It appeared to be not the fire-engine. A moment or two, and Mr. Galloway was conscious of a conversation on the stairs, some visitor making his way up; his man-servant offering a feeble opposition.

"What on earth does John mean? He must be a fool—letting



people come up here!" thought Mr. Galloway, apostrophising his many-years' servitor. "Hark! It can never be the Dean!"

That any other living man, whether church dignitary or ordinary mortal, would venture to invade him in his private sanctum, take him by storm in his own chamber, was beyond belief. Mr. Galloway, all fluttered and fevered, hitched his white night-cap a little higher, turned his wondering face to the door, and sat listening.

"If he's neither in bed nor undressed, as you say, I can see him up here just as well as below; so don't bother, old John," were the words that caught indistinctly the disturbed invalid's ear: and somehow the voice seemed to strike some uncertain chord of memory. "I say, old John, you don't get younger," it went on; "where's your hair gone? Is this the room?—it used to be."

Without further ado, the door was flung open; and the visitor stepped over the threshold. The two, invader and invaded, gazed at each other. The one saw an old man, who appeared to be shrunk in spite of his wraps, with a red face, surmounted by a cotton night-cap, a flaxen curl or two peeping out above the amazed eyes, and a basin of steaming gruel: the other saw a tall, fine, well-dressed young fellow, whose face, like the voice, struck on the chords of memory. John spoke from behind.

"It's Mr. Roland Yorke, sir. He'd not be stayed: he would come up in spite of me."

"Goodness bless me!" exclaimed the proctor.

Putting down his hat and a small brown paper parcel that he carried, Roland advanced to Mr. Galloway, nearly turning over the stand and the gruel, which John had to rush forward and steady—and held out his hand.

"I don't know whether you'll shake it, sir, after the way we parted. I am willing."

"The way of parting was yours, Mr. Roland, not mine," was the answer. But Mr. Galloway did shake the hand, and Roland sat down by the fire, uninvited, making himself at home, as usual.

"What's amiss, sir?" he asked, as John went away. "Got the mumps? Is that gruel? Horrid composition! I think it must have been invented for our sins. You must be uncommon ill, sir, to swallow that."

"And what in the world brings you down here at this hour, frightening quiet people out of their senses?" demanded Mr. Galloway, paying no heed to Roland's questions. "I'm sure I thought it was the parish engine."

"The train brought me," replied matter-of-fact Roland. "I had meant to get here by an earlier one, but things went cross and contrary."

"That was no reason why you should knock my door down."

"Oh, it was all my impatience!" penitently acknowledged Roland. "I hope you'll forgive it, sir. I say, Mr. Galloway, I've come from London about this miserable business of Arthur Channing. We want to know where you sent him to?"

Mr. Galloway, his doubts set at rest, had been getting cool; but the name turned him hot again. He had grown to like Arthur better than he would have cared to tell; the supposition flashed into his mind that a discovery might have been made of some untoward fate having overtaken him, and that Roland's errand was to break the news.

"Is Arthur dead?" he questioned, in a low tone.

"I think so," answered Roland. "But he has not turned up yet, dead or alive. I'm sure it's not for the want of looking after. I've spent my time pretty well, since he was missing, between Waterloo Bridge and the East India docks."

"Then you've not come down to say he is found?"

"No: only to ask you where you sent him that night, that he may be."

When the explanation was complete, Roland discovered that he had had his journey for nothing, and would have done well to take the opinion of Hamish Channing. Every tittle of information that Mr. Galloway was able to give, he had already written to Hamish: not a thought, not a supposition, but he had imparted it in full. As to Roland's idea that business might have carried Arthur to dishonest neighbourhoods in London, Mr. Galloway negatived it positively.

"He had none to do for me in such places, and I'm sure he'd not of his own."

Roland sat pulling at his whiskers, very gloomy. In his sanguine temperament, he had been buoying himself with a hope that grew higher and higher all the way down: so that when he arrived at Mr. Galloway's he had nearly persuaded himself that—if Arthur, in person, was not there, news of him would be. Hence the loud and impatient door-summons.

"I know he is at the bottom of the Thames! I did so hope you could throw some light on it that you might have forgotten to tell, Mr. Galloway."

"Forgotten!" returned Mr. Galloway, slightly agitated. "If I remembered my sins, young man, as well as I remember all connected with him, I might be the better for it. His disappearance has made me ill; that's what it has done; and I'm not sure but it will kill me. When a steady, honourable, God-fearing young man like Arthur Channing, whose heart, I verily believe was as much in heaven as earth; when such a man disappears in this mysterious manner at night in London, leaving no information of his whereabouts, and who cannot be traced or found, nothing but the worst is to be apprehended. I believe

Arthur Channing to have been murdered for the sake of the large sum of money he had about him."

Mr. Galloway seized his handkerchief, and rubbed his hot face. The night-cap was pushed a little further off in the process. It was the precise view Roland had taken; and, to have it confirmed by Mr. Galloway's, seemed to drive all hope out of him for good.

"And I never had the opportunity of atoning to him for the past, you see, Mr. Galloway! It will stick in my memory for life, like a pill in the throat. I'd rather have been murdered myself ten times over."

"I gave my consent to his going with reluctance," said Mr. Galloway, seeming to repeat the fact for his own benefit rather than for Roland's. "What did it signify whether Charles was met in London, or not? If he could find his way to London from Marseilles alone, surely he might find it to Helstonleigh; our busy time, the November audit, is approaching; but it was not that thought that swayed me against it, but an inward instinct. Arthur said he had not had a holiday for two years; he said there was business wanting the presence of one of us in London: all true, and I yielded. And this is what has come of it!"

Mr. Galloway gave his face another rub; the night-cap went higher and seemed to hang on only by its tassel, admitting the curls to full view. In spite of Roland's despairing state, he took advantage of the occasion.

"I say, Mr. Galloway, your hair is not as luxuriant as it was."

"It's like me, then," returned Mr. Galloway, whose mind was too much depressed to resent personal remarks. "What will become of us all without Arthur (putting out of sight for a moment the awful grief for himself) I cannot imagine. Look at his mother! He nearly supported the house: Mrs. Channing's own income is but a trifle, and Tom can't give much as yet. Look at me! What on earth I shall do without him at the office, never can be surmised!"

"My goodness!" cried modest Roland. "You'll be almost as much put to it, sir, as you were when I went off to Port Natal."

Mr. Galloway coughed. "Almost," assented he, rather satirically. "Why, Roland Yorke, if you had been with me from then till now, and abandoned all your lazy tricks, and gone in for hard work, taking not a day's holiday or an hour's play, you could never have made yourself into half the capable and clever man that Arthur was."

"Well, you see, Mr. Galloway, my talents don't lie so much in the sticking to a desk as in knocking about," good-humouredly avowed Roland. "But I do go in for hard work; I do indeed."

"I hear you didn't make a fortune at Port Natal, young man!"

Roland, open as ever, gave a short summary of what he did instead—starved, and did work as a labourer when he could get any to do, and drove pigs, and came back home with his coat out at elbows.

"Nobody need reproach me; it was worse for me than for them—

not but what lots of people do. I tried my best ; and I am trying it still. It did me one service, Mr. Galloway—took my pride and my laziness out of me. But for the lessons of life I learnt at Port Natal, I should have continued a miserable humbug to the end, shirking work on my own score, and looking to other folks to keep me. I'm trying to do my best honestly, and to make my way. The returns are not grand yet, but such as they are I'm living on them, and they may get better. Rome was not built in a day. I went out to Port Natal to set good old Arthur right with the world ; I couldn't bring myself to publish the confession, that you know of, sir, while I stopped here. I thought to make my fortune also, a few millions, or so. I didn't do it ; it was a failure altogether, but it made a better man of me."

"Glad to hear it," said Mr. Galloway.

He watched the earnest eager face, bent towards him ; he noted the genuine, truthful, serious tone the words were spoken in ; the conclusion he drew was that Roland might not be making an unjustifiable boast. It seemed incredible though, taking into recollection his former experience of that gentleman.

"And when I've got on, so as to make a couple of hundred a year or so, I'm going to get married, Mr. Galloway."

"In—deed !" exclaimed Mr. Galloway, staring very much. "Is the lady fixed upon ?"

"Well, yes ; and I don't mind telling you, if you'll keep the secret and not repeat it to the town : I don't fancy she'd like it to be talked of yet. It's Annabel."

"Annabel Channing !" uttered Mr. Galloway, in dubious surprise. "Has she said she'll have you ?"

"I'm not sure that she has *said* it. She means it."

"Why she—she is one of the best and sweetest girls living ; she might marry almost anybody ; she might nearly get a lord," burst forth Mr. Galloway, with a touch of his former gossiping propensity.

Roland's eyes sparkled. "So she might, sir. But she'll wait for me. And she does not expect riches, either ; but will put her shoulder to the wheel with me and be content to work and help until riches come."

Mr. Galloway gave a sniff of disbelief. He might be pardoned if he treated this in his own mind as a simple delusion on Roland's part. He liked Annabel nearly as well as he had liked Arthur ; and he looked upon Mr. Roland as a wandering knight-errant, not much likely to do any good for himself or others. Roland rose.

"I must be off," he said. "I've got my mother to see. Well, this is a pill—to find you've no clue to give me. Hamish said it would be so."

"I hear Hamish Channing is ill ?"

"He is not ill, that I know of. He looks it : a puff of wind you'd say would blow him away."

"Disappointed in his book?"

"Well, I suppose so. It's an awful sin, though, to have written it down; whoever did it."

"I should call it a swindle," corrected Mr. Galloway. "A bare-faced, swindling injustice. The public ought to be put right, if there were any way of doing it."

"Did you read the book, Mr. Galloway?"

"Yes: and then I went forthwith out and bought it. And I read Gerald's."

"That *was* a beauty, wasn't it!" cried sarcastic Roland.

"Without paint," pursued Mr. Galloway, in the same strain. "It was just worth throwing on the fire leaf by leaf: that's my opinion of Gerald's book. But it got the reviews, Roland."

"And be shot to it! We can't understand the riddle up in London, sir."

"I'm sure we can't down here," emphatically repeated Mr. Galloway. "Well, good night: I'm not sorry to have seen you. When are you going back?"

"To-morrow. And I'd rather have gone a hundred miles the other way than come near Helstonleigh. I shall take care to go and see nobody here, except Mrs. Channing. If——"

"You must not speak of Arthur to Mrs. Channing," interrupted the proctor.

"Not speak of him!"

"She knows nothing of his loss: it has been kept from her. She thinks he is in Paris with Charles. In her weak state of health she would hardly stand the prolonged suspense."

"It's a good thing you told me," said Roland, heartily. "I hope I shan't let it out. Good night, sir. I must not forget this, though," he added, turning to take up the parcel. "It has got a clean shirt and collar in it."

"Where are you going to sleep?"

Roland paused. Until that moment the thought had never struck him where he was to sleep.

"I dare say they can give me a shake-down at the mother's. The hearth-rug will do: I'm not particular. I'd used to go in for a feather bed and two pillows. My goodness! what a selfish young lunatic I was!"

"If they can't, perhaps we can give you a shake-down here," said Mr. Galloway. "But don't you ring the house down if you come back."

"Thank you, sir," said Roland, gratefully. "I wonder all you old friends are so good to me."

He clattered down in a commotion, and found himself in the Boundaries. When he passed through them ten minutes before, he was bearing on too fiercely to Mr. Galloway's to take notice of a single



feature. Time had been when Roland would not have cared for old memories. They came crowding upon him now: the dear life associations, the events and interests of his boyhood, like fresh green resting-places 'mid a sandy desert. The ringing out of the cathedral clock, telling the three-quarters, helped the delusion. Opposite to him rose the time-honoured edifice, worn by the defacing hand of centuries. Renovation had been going on for a long while: the pinnacles were new; old buildings around, that formerly partially obscured it, had been removed, and it stood out to view as Roland had never before seen it. It was a bright night; the moon shone as clearly as it had done on that early March night which ushered in the commencing prologue of this story. It brought out the fret-work of the dear old cathedral; it lightened up the gables of the quaint houses of the Boundaries, all sizes and shapes in architecture, it glittered on the level grass enclosed by the broad gravel walks, which the stately dames of the still more stately church dignitaries once cared to pace. But where were the tall old elm-trees—through whose foliage the moonbeams ought to have glittered, but did not? Where were the rooks that used to make their home in them, wiling the poor college boys, at their Latin and Greek hard by, with the friendly chorus of caws? Gone. Roland looked up, eyes and mouth alike opening with amazement, and marvelled. A poor apology for the trees was indeed left; but topped and lopped to discredit. The branches, towering and spreading in their might, had been removed, and the homeless rooks driven away, wanderers.

"It's nothing but sacrilege," spoke bold Roland, when he had done staring. "For certain it'll bring nobody good luck."

He could not resist crossing the Boundaries to the little iron gate admitting to the cloisters. It would not admit him to-night: the cloister porter, successor to Mr. John Ketch, of cantankerous memory, had locked it hours ago, and had the key safely hung up by his bedside in his lodge. This was the gate through which poor Charley Channing had gone, innocently confiding, to be frightened all but to death, that memorable night in the annals of the college school. Charley, who was now a flourishing young clerk in India (at the present moment enjoying Paris), and likely to rise to fame and fortune, health permitting. Many a time and oft had Roland himself dashed through the gate, surplice on arm, in a white heat of fear lest he should be marked "late." How the shouts of the boys used to echo along the vaulted roofs of the cloisters! How they seemed to echo in the heart of Roland now! Times had changed. Things had changed. He had changed. A new set of boys filled the school: some of the clergy were fresh in the cathedral. The bishop, gone to his account, had been replaced by a better: a once great and good preacher, who was wont in times long gone by to fill the cathedral with his hearers of jostling crowds, had followed him. In Mr. Roland's own family, and in that

of one with whom they had been more intimately associated, there were changes. George Yorke was no more; Gerald had risen to be a great man; he, Roland, had fallen, and was of no account in the world. Mr. Channing had died; Hamish was dying——

How came that last thought to steal into the mind of Roland Yorke? *He did not know.* It had never occurred to him before: why should it have done so now? Ah, he might ask himself the question, but he could not answer it. Buried in reflections of the past and present, one leading on to another, it had followed in as if consecutively, arising Roland knew not whence, and startling him to terror. He shook himself in a sort of fright; his pulses grew quick, his face hot.

"I do think I must have been in a dream," debated Roland. "Or else moonstruck. Sunny Hamish! as if the world could afford to lose him! Nobody but a donkey whose brains had been knocked out of him at Port Natal, would get such wicked fancies."

He went back at full gallop, turned the corner, and looked out for the windows of his mother's house. They were not difficult to be seen, for in every one of them shone a blaze of light. The sweet white radiance of the moon with its beauteous softness, never to be matched by earthly invention, was quite eclipsed in the garish red of the flaming windows. Lady Augusta Yorke had a party—as was plain enough by the signs.

"Was ever the like bother known!" spoke Roland aloud, momentarily halting in the quiet spot. "She's got all the world and his wife there. And I didn't want a soul to know that I was at Helstonleigh!"

He took his resolution at once, ran on, and made for a small side door. A smart maid, in a flounced gown and no cap to make mention of, stood at it, flirting with a footman from one of the waiting carriages. Roland went in head-foremost, saying nothing, passing swiftly through tortuous passages and up the stairs. The girl naturally took him for a robber, or some such evil character, and stood agape with wonder. But she did not want for courage, and went after him. He had made his way to what used to be his sisters' schoolroom in Miss Channing's time; the open door displayed a table temptingly set out with light refreshments, and nobody was in it. When the maid got there, Roland, his hat on a chair and parcel on the floor, was devouring the sandwiches.

"Why, what on earth!" she began. "My patience! Who are you, sir? How dare you?"

"Who am I," said Roland, his mouth nearly too full to answer. "You just go and fetch Lady Augusta here. Say a gentleman wants to see her. Tell her privately, mind."

The girl, in sheer amazement, did as she was bid: whispering her own comments to her mistress.

"I'd be aware of him, my lady, if I were you, please. It might be a

maniac. I'm sure the way he's gobbling up the victuals don't look like nothing else."

Lady Augusta Yorke, slightly fluttered, took the precaution to draw with her her youngest son, Harry, a stalwart King's Scholar of seventeen. Advancing dubiously to the interview, she took a peep in, and saw the intruder; a great tall fellow whose back was towards her, swallowing down big table-spoonfuls of custard. The sight aroused Lady Augusta's anger: there'd be a famine; there'd be nothing left for her hungry guests. In she burst, something after Roland's own fashion, words of reproach on her tongue, threats of the police. Harry gazed in doubt; the maid brought up the rear.

Roland turned, full of affection, dropped the spoon into the custard-dish, and flew to embrace her.

"How are you, mother darling! It's only me."

And the Lady Augusta Yorke, between surprise at the meeting, a little joy, and vexation on the score of her diminishing supper, was somewhat overwhelmed, and sunk into a chair in screaming hysterics.

(To be continued.)



## LUCREZIA BORGIA.

THE woman whose name stands at the head of this paper has been portrayed in more widely varying colours than perhaps any of the personages that are represented upon the canvas of history. Some authors have painted her with a radiant halo crowning her brow, such as might become a St. Catherine or a St. Theresa; while some have depicted her in the midst of a dark, foul mist, such as might surround the form of a Messalina. We intend to draw neither an angel nor a demon, but a woman; and in so doing we believe that we shall give the reader the most just idea of Lucrezia Borgia's character.

Lucrezia was the illegitimate daughter of that most courteously bland of murderers; that most majestically dignified of profligates; that prince of religious comedians, Pope Alexander VI. Her mother was Perpetua Vanozza, a Sicilian lady of great beauty, and, it is said, of respectable birth; who for many years contrived to maintain the position of chief favourite in the seraglio of his graceless Holiness—a circumstance which proves that Perpetua must have been as astute as she was fair. Madama Vanozza became the mother of several children enjoying the privilege of being called by the name of Borgia, and (long after her priestly lover was lying in the vaults of St. Peter's) lived on in the comfortable nest which she had feathered for herself in the days of her summer. The atmosphere which surrounded Lucrezia's childhood, forms the strongest excuse for anything we may see to blame in her future story; indeed, when we look more closely into the influences that must have worked upon her in her earliest years, we cannot help wondering at the vast deal of genuine, sweet, tender womanliness we find in her nature. Among the sort of company that must have frequented the house of the Pope's mistress, the child would be brought into close contact with all the darkest and ugliest realities of human life, in a far more rude and abrupt way than could be suitable for the young female mind. From this house she would go for religious instruction to the neighbouring convent, where legends of saints, and miracles, and visions would be poured upon her in such wild confusion, that her little brain would grow perfectly bewildered. As she grew older she would begin, with all that quickness of intelligence for which she is said so early to have been remarkable, to consider how all the sensuous materialism she saw in the maternal home, and all the fantastic idealism she heard of in the cloister, could be reconciled in the same world. After puzzling her way through this difficulty, she would at length arrive at the conclusion that daily practice

and abstract religious faith, were written in two entirely separate columns upon the page of man's life, and that if you studied at stated seasons the sacred section, it would quite counteract any amount of naughtiness you might meet with in the secular one. All this time Lucrezia's intellect was not left fallow. She was made a proficient in the Latin, French, and Spanish languages, and her tastes in painting, music, and poetry were carefully trained. Alexander, who, with all his crimes, was an affectionate father, must have beheld with delight the wondrous buds of beauty and talent the girl year by year put forth; and must have indulged in many a brilliant dream for her future, as he lay taking his luxurious siesta in the cool halls of St. Angelo.

When Lucrezia had reached her sixteenth year, Alexander began to look about for a son-in-law who might at once strengthen his own hands and place his daughter in an advantageous position. But the princes of Italy were not anxious for a match with the Pope's illegitimate daughter. At length, however, Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, whose coronet was just then sitting unsteadily upon his head, on account of the many foreign sceptres stretched out to push it off, agreed (if the Pope would promise him his support) to overlook the bar-sinister in the young lady's escutcheon; and Giovanni, Francesco's son, and Lucrezia, found themselves very speedily joined by a nuptial chain, in the forging of which neither of them had had the slightest hand. This union proved a very flavourless conjugal dish for both parties.

Lucrezia was not, at sixteen, the perfect mistress in fascination she afterwards became, and the apathetic, characterless young Sforza seems never to have regarded her with any stronger feeling than that of calm indifference, a sentiment which she fully returned. At the end of two or three years, Alexander finding the Duke of Milan an unprofitable ally, and having other views for his daughter, annulled, with one stroke of the Pontifical legerdemain, the marriage, and Giovanni and Lucrezia separated, to their mutual extreme satisfaction.

The King of Naples was now the potentate with whom Alexander was anxious to make an alliance, and to him he made overtures for a union between Lucrezia and the king's illegitimate son Alphonso, Duke of Bisceglie. The king consented on condition that his son, whom he tenderly loved, should show an inclination for the marriage before he knew that his father desired it. In order to effect this, the Pope asked the young duke to visit him in Rome. On his arrival there, Bisceglie was caused to take up his residence in the house of a cardinal, with whom Lucrezia (of course, to all outward seeming, entirely by chance) then happened to be staying. For a few days the duke was kept quiet in the cardinal's palazzo, and, during this time, Lucrezia, who was now a much more finished expert in the art of charming than when she married Sforza, brought to bear upon him the whole artillery of her face and her wit. Little wonder was it that the inexperienced lad of seventeen,



rushed headlong into the flowery bonds prepared for him, and received with rapturous delight the information that his divinity was to be his wife. For Bisceglie, Lucrezia seems to have felt a sort of condescending, pitying liking, and to have lived with him in tolerably domestic peace. She gave the duke a son, who was either removed from her after his father's death, or else died young, for no mention is afterwards made of him in connection with his mother.

Lucrezia's second trial of the marriage state was not to last long. One evening, as he came out of a church, the young duke was attacked by a band of armed men in masks, and fell, covered with many wounds. When the assassins had left him, his servants, who had been too terrified to defend him, carried him to his palace, still alive. There Lucrezia and his sister Sanchia watched and nursed him with the most unwearying devotion. Their care, and his own healthy, young constitution got the better of his wounds, and he was in a fair way of recovery; but one day the wife and sister left his apartment for a little repose, and on their return they found Bisceglie lying dead from strangulation.

This assassination is one of the most mysterious of the many dark deeds of blood that stain the history of Alexander's pontificate. Lucrezia's brother, Cesare, was generally supposed to be the author of the crime; but if it was so, neither wife nor father-in-law ever showed any outward resentment. Perhaps their fear of Cesare, who was of a yet more vindictive and unscrupulous nature than his father, may have had something to do with their inertness in the matter.

The fair widow was by no means inconsolable; for after a few months spent in retirement at Nepi (during which time she was more probably recovering from the shock caused by the sudden manner of her husband's death than mourning very deeply his loss), we find her again at Rome, joining in the festivities of the Papal Court. Great was the trust placed by Alexander in the intellect and courage of his daughter. When he was absent from Rome, he left with her the reins of government, and the key of his treasury always hung at her girdle.

It is during this period of her widowhood that the darkest aspersions have been cast upon Lucrezia's reputation; and we must own that we cannot clear her from them. We do not indeed credit the abominable assertions made by some writers concerning the domestic life of the Borgia family, but we believe that, could we have mixed with the Roman society of that day, we should have heard whispered about facts very damaging to Lucrezia's character.

Alexander began now to frame a more ambitious scheme for the aggrandizement of his beloved child than any he had hitherto cherished. Alphonso, the eldest son of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, was now a widower, and he was the husband that the Pope had fixed upon for his daughter. The great abilities of the D'Este family had raised the standard of Ferrara until it floated above every other banner in Italy; and Alexander

felt that by such a marriage he should not only cause his darling to sit at the same table with princesses, but should give his own temporal power a most solid and lasting support. The proposal was, however, at first indignantly rejected by Duke Ercole. How could the blood of the D'Estes submit to commingle with the blood of Perpetua Vanozza? Besides, the winds which blew from the Roman campagna wafted no very fragrant report of the lady's fair fame. But the Pope persisted, and persuaded the King of France, who, for some political reason, was just then a most dutiful son of the Church, to send a special envoy to Ferrara upon the subject; and by means of threats, coaxing, and promises of large dower, the clever Frenchman at length was successful in his mission; yet, though Duke Ercole consented, his son was still reluctant. His first wife, who was a noble and virtuous lady, had been tenderly loved by him; and how should he bear to see in her place this tarnished jewel—this flower so lavish of her sweets—this daughter of the detested Borgia! Notwithstanding Alphonso's sentiments, the marriage treaty was proceeded with; and a brilliant *cortège*, comprising two of Ercole's younger sons, left Ferrara to go to Rome to fetch home the bride. Great was the exultation in the Borgia family, and most of all was it displayed by Lucrezia. The moment the news of the duke's consent having been given arrived, she went to the shrine of the Madonna to thank her publicly for her husband. She rewarded splendidly two actors who ran through the streets proclaiming her new dignity. She wore out her dressmakers with the variety and richness of her *trousseau*. Nor can we much wonder at her joy. The position of the Pope's daughter at his Court was at the best a very anomalous and delicate one, and from this she was to be removed to the most brilliant situation in Italy. Besides, who could tell how soon her brother Cesare, who resented the greater trust placed in her than in himself by their father, and who had already put out of the way her husband and their elder brother, the Duke of Gandia, might not take it into his head to get rid of her also? It was no small advantage to be beyond the clutches of that precious brother, and to escape the ruin which the perspicacious lady saw impending over their house on the Pope's death; she was parting with her freedom as a rich widow at a comparatively early age, but men and women lived quickly their lives in the Rome of that day. Lucrezia at twenty-two was as much satiated with pleasure as an antiquated coquette of fifty among ourselves.

With himself and his horse all ablaze with gold and jewels, and surrounded by the flower of the Roman nobility, Cesare Borgia went forth to meet the Ferrarese embassy. The magnificence of their reception was excessive, and terrible the taxation laid on the people to pay for it. Yet none dared murmur, so great was the dread of Cesare Borgia. Alexander, with another stroke of the pontifical legerdemain, united Alphonso and Lucrezia without the presence of the bridegroom;

and then, blessed aloud by the Pope and cursed under their breath by the starving populace, Lucrezia left Rome.

We cannot here enter into all the gorgeous pomp that attended the bride's entrance into Ferrara. It is all one rainbow-tinted mass of jewelled aigrettes, and shimmering silks, and fluttering plumes, and gilded trappings; while the air is filled with the clang of bells, the clash of military bands, the chant of priests, the song of minstrels, the silver voices of maidens, and the shouts of acrobats. Indeed, when we read of all the ponderous ceremonial, without which no event could happen among distinguished families in the Middle Ages, we are inclined to wonder how the poor ladies ever managed to live through it at all. There is no more remarkable proof of Lucrezia's power of fascination, than the way in which she charmed, on their first meeting with her, not only her husband, but also every member of his family, all of whom were more or less inclined to dislike and mistrust her. Alphonso was completely subjugated by the three-fold spell of her wit, her tact, and her beauty, and from that time till the end of her life was her adoring lover. Old Duke Ercole became the willing slave of his lovely daughter-in-law; while Alphonso's sister, the Marchioness of Mantua, who was one of the most learned ladies of her time (being delighted probably with Lucrezia's fine intellect), grew to be her staunch friend. How far Lucrezia responded to all these feelings it is impossible quite to determine. We should think that she probably grew by degrees thoroughly to esteem her husband, though she never loved him passionately, and that she liked all his family, though she would not have performed any very great act of devotion towards them. This Alphonso D'Este, was, we should think, a man above most of his fellows in that assassinating, pilgrimage-going, miracle-believing, old, mediæval Italy. He was a patient groper after the light of science, and a judicious patron of men of letters and artists; he was a skilful general, and when the winged Venetian lion stretched out his paw towards his Ferrara, he made him beat a hasty retreat. He strove more to please the common people than the nobles, and sold his plate to buy them food in time of scarcity. He was tolerant towards reformers and Jews, and kept that terrible, iron-clawed monster, the Inquisition, chained beneath the steps of his ducal throne.

After her arrival at Ferrara, Lucrezia's health was very delicate, and for some time she did nothing but disappoint the hopes she gave of bringing an heir to the dukedom. At length, however, to the great joy of her husband and his people, she gave birth to a prince, and after that she became the mother of several children. On the death of Duke Ercole, Alphonso and his wife became duke and duchess. Lucrezia also lost her father and her brother Cesare, who, being banished from Rome, received the reward of his misdeeds, first in a foreign prison, and then in an obscure death on the field of battle. Notwith-

standing what has been said by some writers to the contrary, we believe that Lucrezia knew much too well what was good for herself ever to have returned to her old way of living after she became Alphonso's wife. She did indeed indulge sometimes in a little learned flirting with Pietro Bembo and the other literary men who crowded her Court ; but this was done in a dignified and decorous manner, and if any of the poets or scholars lost their hearts, we believe it to have been entirely the fault of their own presumptuous vanity. In all things Lucrezia seems to have made Alphonso a good helpmate. She governed the dukedom prudently in his absence ; she was a careful and affectionate mother to his children ; she was unwearied in deeds of charity in seasons of famine ; she encouraged him in his religious toleration. In this latter quality of Lucrezia, for which she was as remarkable as her husband, and which was, to say the least, very singular in a woman brought up in the shadow of St. Peter, we fancy that we can discern something of the spirit of the penitent Magdalene, who thought too humbly of herself to censure others. When Lucrezia first arrived at Ferrara she acted virtue to suit her new position ; but gradually (and this more especially as the sweet, domestic ties of her Ferrarese home began to twine themselves around her but half-chilled woman's heart) that virtue became real in her, until towards the end, her life grew more elevated and Christian-like. But however much Lucrezia may have endeavoured to atone for the misdoings of her youth, she never (and this is much to her credit in those days of wild religious fanaticism) practised an ascetic retirement that made her forget her duties as a princess. To the last we find her shining in public as became her state, with her expressive grey eyes beaming kindly on her subjects, and her long fair hair flowing from beneath the little cap, sometimes studded with gems and sometimes composed of gold threads, which she always wore.

Lucrezia is said to have been an elegant poetess, and her refined taste, as well as those delicate feminine instincts that often render women the best critics, made her opinion sought by all the chief authors and artists of the day. We should like to have paused to have realized the picture of her in the days of her highest glory, when Bembo lay reading his sonnets at her feet, and Strozzi, the most graceful of Latin poets, wooed his fair Barbara (the woman for whose sake he was afterwards assassinated) under her gentle auspices, and Giorgione came to discuss with her his new fresco, and Tebaldeo sang her praises in his melodious tenor, and Aldo Manuzzo, the prince of mediæval printers, prophesied to her the future triumphs of his trade, and Ariosto strolled in to read to her a letter from Raphael. But we have no time to linger, and that brilliant assembly has vanished like a dream.

In 1519 there went up a cry from Ferrara, which said that the glory had departed from the palace of the D'Este ; for the great duchess, in the prime of life, had passed away from the earth.

Alice King.

## SOPHIE CHALK.

THE horses went spanking along the frosty road, the Squire driving, his red comforter wrapped round his neck. Mrs. Todhetley sat beside him; Tod and I behind. It was one of the jolliest days that early January ever gave us; dark-blue sky, and icicles on the trees: a day to tempt people out. Mrs. Todhetley, getting to her work after breakfast, said it was a shame to stay indoors: and it was hastily decided to drive over to the Whitneys' place and see them. So the large phaeton was brought round.

I had not expected to go. When there was a probability of their staying anywhere sufficiently long for the horses to be put up, Giles was generally taken; the Squire did not like to give trouble to other people's servants. It would not matter at the Whitneys': they had a host of them.

"I don't know that I care about going," said Tod, as we stood outside, waiting for the others, Giles at the horses' heads.

"Not care, Tod! Anna's at home."

He flicked his glove at my face for the impudence. We laughed at him about Anna Whitney sometimes. They were such great friends. The Squire, hearing some nonsense one day, took it seriously, and told Tod it would be time enough for him to get thinking about sweethearts when he was out of leading-strings. Which of course Tod did not like.

It was a long drive; I can tell you that. And as we turned in at the wide gravel sweep that led up to the house, we saw their family coach being brought round, with some luggage on it, the postilion in his undress jacket, just laced on the seams with crimson. The Whitneys never drove from the box.

Whitney Hall was a long red-brick house, with a good many windows, and wide circular steps leading to the door, its park and grounds lying around it. Anna came running to meet us as we went in, dressed for a journey. She was seventeen; very fair; with a gentle face, and smooth, bright, dark auburn hair; one of the sweetest girls you could see on a sunshiny day. Tod was the first to shake hands with her, and I saw her cheeks blush as crimson as Sir John's state liveries.

"You are going out, my dear," said Mrs. Todhetley.

"Oh, yes," she answered, the tears rising in her blue eyes, which were as blue as the dark-blue sky. "We have had bad news. William ——"

The dining-room door across the hall opened and a lot of them came



forth. Lady Whitney in a plaid shawl and the strings of her bonnet untied; Miss Whitney (Helen), Harry, and some of the young ones behind. Anna's quiet voice was drowned, for they all began to tell of it together.

Sir John and William were staying at some friend's house near Ombersley. Lady Whitney thought they would have been home as this day: instead of which the morning's post had brought a letter to say that an accident had occurred to William in hunting: some muff who couldn't ride had gone swerving right against Bill's horse, and he was thrown. Except that Bill was insensible, nothing further of the damage could be gathered from the letter; for Sir John, if put out, was just as unintelligible as the Squire. The chief of what he said was—that they were to come off at once.

"We are going, of course; I, with the two girls and Harry; the carriage is waiting to take us to the station," said poor Lady Whitney, her bonnet pushed off till it hung by one ear. "But I do wish John had explained further: it is such suspense. We don't think it can be extremely serious, or there would have been a telegram. I'm sure I've shivered at every ring that has come to the door this morning."

"And the post was never in till ten o'clock," complained Harry. "I wonder my father puts up with it."

"And the worst is that we had a visitor coming to-day," added Helen. "Mamma would have telegraphed to London for her not to start, but there was no time. It's Sophie Chalk."

"Who's Sophie Chalk?" asked Tod.

Helen told us, while Lady Whitney was finding places for everybody at the table. They had been taking luncheon in a scrambling fashion; sitting or standing: cold beef, mince-pies, and cheese.

"Sophie Chalk was a schoolfellow of mine," said Helen. "It was an old promise—that she should come to visit us. Different things have caused it to be put off, but we have kept up a correspondence. At length I got mamma to say that she might come as soon as Christmas was turned; and to-day was fixed. We don't know what on earth to do."

"Let her come to us until you see how things turn out," cried the Squire, in his hearty good-nature, as he cut himself a slice of beef. "We can take her home in the carriage: one of these boys can ride back if you'll lend him a horse."

Mrs. Todhetley said he took the same words out of her mouth. The Whitneys were too flustered to pretend to make ceremony, and very glad to accept the offer. But I don't think it would ever have been made had the Squire and madam known what was to come of it.

"There will be her luggage," observed Anna; who usually remem-

bered things for everybody. And Lady Whitney laid down the mince-pie she was eating, and looked round in consternation.

"It must come by rail to Alcester; we will send for it from thence," decided Tod, always ready at a pinch. "What sort of a damsel is this Sophie Chalk, Anna?"

"I never saw her," replied Anna. "You must ask Helen."

Tod whispered something to Anna that made her smile and blush. "I'll write you my sentiments about her to Ombersley," he said aloud. "Those London girls are something to look at." And I knew by Tod's tone that he was prepared *not* to like Miss Sophie Chalk.

We saw them out to the carriage; the Squire putting in my lady; Tod, Helen and Anna. One of the housemaids, Lettice Lane, was running in and out wildly, bringing things to the carriage. She had lived with us once; but Hannah's temper and Letty's propensity to gossip did not get on together. Mrs. Todhetley, when they had driven away, asked her how she liked her place—which she had gone into at Michaelmas. Oh, pretty well, Lettice answered: but for her old mother, she should emigrate to Australia. She used to be always saying that at Dyke Manor, and it was one of the things Hannah would not put up with, telling her decent girls could find work at home.

Tod went off next, on horseback: and, before three, we drove to the station to meet the London train. The Squire stayed in the carriage, sending me and Mrs. Todhetley on the platform.

Two passengers got out at the small station; a little lady in feathers, and a butcher in a blue frock, who had a calf in the open van. Mrs. Todhetley stepped up to the lady and inquired whether she was Miss Chalk.

"I am Miss Chalk. Have I the honour of speaking to Lady Whitney?"

While matters were being explained, I stood observing her. A very small, slight person, with pretty features, white as ivory; and wide-open light-blue eyes, that were too close together, and had a touch of boldness on their surface. It would take a great deal to daunt their owner, if I could read countenances—and that I was always doing it was no fault of mine, for the instinct, strong and irrepressible, lay within me—as old Duffham once said: I didn't like her voice, it had no true ring in it; I did not much like her face. But the world in general no doubt found her charming, and the Squire thought her so.

She sat in front with him, a carpet-bag between them; and I, behind, had a great black box filling up my legs. She could not do without that much of her luggage: the rest might come by rail.

"Johnny," whispered Mrs. Todhetley to me, "I'm afraid she's very grand and fashionable. I don't know how we shall manage to amuse her. Do you like her?"

"Well—she has got a stunning lot of hair."

"Beautiful hair, Johnny!"

With the hair close before us, I could but say so. It was brown; rather darker than Anna Whitney's, but with a red tinge upon it, and about double in quantity. Nature or oil was giving it a wonderful gloss in the light of the setting sun, as she turned her head about, laughing and talking with the Squire. Her dress was some bright purple stuff trimmed with white fur; her hands, lying in repose on her lap, had yellow gauntlets on.

"I'm glad I ordered a duck for dinner, in addition to the boiled veal and bacon, Johnny," whispered Mrs. Todhetley again. "The fish won't be much: it's only the cold cod done up in parsley sauce."

Tod, at home long before, was at the door ready for us when we got up. I saw her eyes staring at him in the dusk.

"Who was the gentleman that handed me out?" she asked me as we went in.

"Mr. Todhetley's son."

"I—think—I have heard Helen Whitney talk of him," she said in reflection. "He will be very rich, won't he?"

"Not very. He will have what his father has before him, Miss Chalk."

Mrs. Todhetley offered tea, but she said she would prefer a glass of wine; and went up to her chamber after drinking it. Hannah and the housemaid were putting one hastily in order for her. Sleepy with the frosty air, I was nodding over the fire in the drawing-room when the rustle of silk awoke me.

It was Miss Chalk. She came in like a gleaming fairy, her dress shining in the fire-light; for they had not been in to light the candles. It had a bright green-and-gold tinge, and was cut very low. Did she think we had a party?—or that dressing for dinner was the fashion in our plain country house—as it might have been at a duke's? Her shoulders and arms were white as snow; she wore a silver necklace, the like of which I never saw before, silver bracelets, and a thick cord of silver twisting in and out of the complications of her hair.

"I'm sure it is very kind of your people to take me in," she said, standing still on the hearth-rug in her beauty. "They have lighted a fire in my room; it is so comfortable. I do like a country house. At Lady Augustus Difford's——"

Her head went round at the opening of the door. It was Tod. She stepped timidly towards him, like a school-girl: dressed as now, she looked no older than one. Tod might have made up his mind not to like her; but he had to surrender. Holding out her hand to him, he could but yield to the attractive vision, and his heart shone in his eyes as he bent them upon her.

"I beg your pardon for having passed you without notice; I did not even thank you for lifting me down; but I was frozen with the

cold drive," she said, in a low tone. "Will you forgive me, Mr. Todhetley?"

Forgive her! as Tod stood there with her hand in his, he looked inclined to eat her. Forgiveness was not enough. He led her to the fire, speaking softly some words of gallantry.

"Helen Whitney has often talked to me about you, Mr. Todhetley. I little thought I should ever make your acquaintance; still less, be staying in your father's house."

"And I as little dreamt of the good fortune that was in store for me," answered Tod.

He was a tall, fine young fellow of twenty then, looking older than his age; she (as she looked to-night) a delicate, beautiful fairy, of any teens fancy might please to picture. As Tod stood over her, his manner took a gentle air, his eyes a shy light—quite entirely unusual with him. She did not look up, save by a modest glance now and again, dropping her eyes when they met his own. He had the chance to take out his fill of gazing, and used it.

Tod was caught. From that very first night that his eyes fell on Sophie Chalk, his heart went out to her. Anna Whitney! What child's-play had the joking about her been to this! Anna might have been his sister, for all the regard he had for her of a certain sort; and he knew it now.

A looker-on sees more than a player, and I did not like one thing—she drew him on to love her. If ever a girl spread a net to entangle a man's unconscious feet, that girl was Sophie Chalk. She went about it artistically, too; in the sweetest, most natural way imaginable; and Tod never saw or suspected mortal atom of it. No fellow in a similar case ever does. If their heart's not engaged, their vanity is; and it blinds them utterly. I said a word or two to him, and nearly got knocked down for my pains. At the fortnight's end—and she was with us nearly that length of time—Tod's heart had made its choice for weal or for woe.

She took care that it should be so, she did, though he cut my head off now for saying it. You shall judge. On that first night when she came down in her gleaming silk, with the silver on her neck and hair, she began. In the drawing-room, after dinner, she sat by him on the sofa, talking in a low voice, her face turned to him, lifting her eyes and dropping them again. My belief is, she must have been to a school where they taught eye-play. Tod thought it was sweet, natural, modest shyness. I thought it was all artistic. Mrs. Todhetley was called from the room on domestic matters; the Squire, gone to sleep in his dinner-chair, had not come in. After tea, when all were present, she went to the piano, which nobody ever opened but me, and played and sang, keeping Tod by her side to turn the music, and to talk to her at available

moments. In point of execution, her singing was perfect, but the voice was a rather harsh one—not a note of real melody in it. After breakfast the next morning, when we were away together, she came to us in her jaunty hat, all feathers, and purple dress with its white fur. She lured him off to show her the dyke and goodness knows what else, leaving Lena, who had come out with her, to be taken home by me. In the afternoon Tod drove her out in the pony-chaise; they had settled the drive between them down by the dyke, and I know she had contrived for it, just as surely as though I had been behind the hedge listening. I don't say Tod was loth; it was quite the other thing from the first. They took a two-hours' drive, coming home at dusk; and then she laughed and talked with him and me round the fire until it was time to get ready for dinner. That second evening she came down in a gauzy sort of dress, with a thin white body. Mrs. Todhetley thought she would be cold, but she said she was used to it. And so it went on; never were they apart for an hour—no, nor scarcely for a minute in the day.

At first Mr. and Mrs. Todhetley saw nothing. Rather were they glad Tod should be so attentive to a stranger; for special politeness had not previously been amid Tod's virtues; but they could but notice as the thing went on. Mrs. Todhetley grew to have an uneasy look in her eyes, and one day the Squire spoke out. Sophie Chalk had tied a pink woollen scarf over her head to go out with him to see the rabbits fed: he ran back for something, and the Squire caught his arm.

"Don't carry that on too far, Joe. You don't know who the girl is."  
"What nonsense, sir!" returned Tod, with a ready laugh; but he turned the colour of a peony.

We did not know much about her, except that she seemed to be on the high ropes, talking a good deal of great people, and of Lord and Lady Augustus Difford, with whom she had been staying for two months before Christmas. Her home in London, she said, was at her sister's, who had married a wealthy merchant, and lived fashionably in Torriana Square. Mrs. Todhetley did not like to appear inquisitive, and would not question. She was with us as the Whitneys' friend, and that was sufficient.

Bill Whitney's hurt turned out to be something complicated in the ribs. There was no danger after the first week, and they returned home during the second, bringing Bill with them. Helen Whitney wrote the same day for Sophie Chalk, and she said that her mamma would be happy also to see Tod and me for a short while.

We went over in the large phaeton, Tod driving with Miss Chalk beside him; I and Dwarf Giles behind. She had thanked Mrs. Todhetley in the prettiest manner; she told the Squire, as he handed her into the carriage, that she should never forget his kindness, and hoped some time to find an opportunity of repaying it.



Such kissing between Helen and Sophie Chalk! I thought they'd never leave off. Anna stood by Tod, while he looked on. He had no eyes now for her. Lady Whitney asked if we would go upstairs to William: he was impatient to see us both.

"Halloa, old Johnny!"

He was lying on his back on a broad flat sofa, looking just as well as ever in the face. They had given him up the best bedroom and dressing-room because he was ill: nice rooms, both—with the door open between.

"How did it happen, Bill?"

"Goodness knows! Some fellow rode his horse pretty near over mine—don't believe he had ever been across anything but a donkey before. Where's Tod?"

"Somewhere—I thought he was close behind me."

"I'm so glad you two have come. It's awfully dull, lying here all day."

"Are you obliged to lie?"

"Carden says so."

"Do you have Carden?"

"As if our folks would be satisfied without him when it's a surgical case, and one of danger. He was telegraphed for on the spot, and got over in less than an hour. It happened near the Ombersley station. He comes here every other day, and Featherston between whiles as his *locum tenens*."

Tod burst in with a laugh. He had been talking to the girls in the gallery outside. Leaving him and Bill Whitney to have out their own chaffer, I went through the door to the other room—the fire there was the largest.

"How do you do, sir?"

Somebody in a neat brown gown and close white cap, sewing at a table behind the door, had got up to say this with a curtsy. Where had I seen her?—a woman of three or four and thirty, with a delicate, meek face, and subdued expression. She saw the puzzle.

"I am Harry Lease's widow, sir. He was pointsman at South Crabb."

Why, yes, to be sure! And she was not much altered either. But it was a good while now since he died, and she and the children had moved away at the time. I shook hands: the sight of her brought poor Harry Lease to my mind—and many other things.

"Are you living here?"

"I have been nursing young Mr. Whitney, sir. Mr. Carden sent me over from Worcester to the place where he was lying; and my lady thought I might as well come on here with them for a bit, though he don't want more done for him now than a servant could do. What a deal you've grown, sir!"

"Have I? You should see Joseph Todhetley. You knew me, though, Mrs. Lease?"

"I remembered your voice, sir. Besides I heard Miss Anna say that you were coming here."

Asking after Polly, she gave me the family history since Lease's death. First of all, after moving to her mother's at Worcester, she tried to get a living at making gloves. Her two youngest children caught some disorder, and died; and then she took to go out nursing. In that she succeeded so well—for it seemed to be her vocation, she said—as to be brought under the notice of some of the medical gentlemen of the town. They gave her plenty to do, and she earned an excellent living, Polly and the other two being cared for by the grandmother.

"After the scuffle, and toil, and sorrow of the old days, nursing seems like a holiday for me, Master Ludlow," she concluded; "and I am at home with the children for a day or two as often as I can be."

"Johnny!"

The call was Bill Whitney's, and I went into the other room. Helen was there, but not Tod. She and Bill were disputing.

"I tell you, William, I shall bring her in. She has asked to come. You can't think how nice she is."

"And I tell you, Helen, that I won't have her brought in. What do I want with your Sophie Chalks?"

"It will be your loss."

"So be it! I can't do with strange girls here."

"You'll see that."

"Now look here, Helen—I *won't* have it. To-morrow is Mr. Carden's day for coming, and I'll tell him that I can't be left in peace. He'll soon give you a word of a sort."

"Oh, well, if you are so serious as that, let it drop," returned Helen, with good-humour. "I only thought to give you pleasure—and Sophie Chalk did ask to come in."

"Who *is* this Sophie Chalk? That's about the nineteenth time I've asked it."

"The sweetest girl in the world."

"Let that go. Who is she?"

"I went to school with her at Miss Lakon's. She used to do my French for me, and touch up my drawings. We vowed a lasting friendship, and I'm not going to forget it. Everybody loves her. Lord and Lady Augustus Difford have just had her staying with them for two months."

"Good souls!" cried Bill, satirically.

"She is the loveliest fairy in the world, and dresses like an angel. Will you see her now, William?"

"No."

Helen went off with a flounce. Bill was half laughing, half peevish over it. The confinement made him fretful.

"As if I'd let them bring a parcel of girls in to bother me! *You've* had her for these past three weeks, I hear, Johnny."

"Pretty near it."

"Do you like her?"

"Tod does."

"What sort of a creature is the syren?"

"She'd fascinate the hair off your head, Bill; give her the chance."

"Then I'll be shot if she shall get the chance as far as mine goes! Lease!"—raising his voice—"keep all strange ladies out of here. If they attempt to enter, tell them we've got rats."

"Very well, sir."

Other visitors were staying in the house. A Miss Deveen, and her companion, Miss Cattledon. We saw them first at dinner. Miss Deveen sat by Sir John—an ancient lady, active and upright, with a pleasant face and white hair. She had on a shirt-front of worked muslin, with three emerald studs in it that glittered more than diamonds. They looked beautiful. After dinner, when those four old ones began whist, and we were at the other end of the drawing-room in a group, somebody spoke of the studs.

"They are nothing compared to some of her jewellery," said Helen Whitney. "She has a whole set of diamonds, most beautiful! I hardly know what they are worth."

"But those emeralds, which she has on to-night, must be of value," cried Sophie Chalk. "See how they sparkle!"

It made us all turn. As Miss Deveen stirred with the movement of throwing down her cards, the rays from the wax-lights shone on the emeralds, bringing out the purest green ever imagined by a painter.

"I should like to steal them," said Sophie Chalk; "they'd look well on me."

It made us laugh. Tod had his eyes fixed on her, a strange love lying in their depths. Anna Whitney, kneeling on the ground behind me, could see it.

"I'd rather steal a set of pink topaz studs that she has," spoke Helen; "and the opals, too. Miss Deveen is great in studs."

"Why in studs?"

"Because she always wears this kind of white body; it's her evening dress, with satin skirts. I know she has a different set of studs for every day in the week."

"Who is she?" asked Sophie Chalk.

"A cousin of mamma's. She has a great deal of money, and no one in particular to leave it to. Harry says he hopes she'll remember, in making her will, that he is only a poor younger son."

"Just you shut up, Helen," interrupted Harry, in a whisper. "I believe that companion has got ears behind her head."

Miss Cattledon glanced round from the whist-table, as though the

ears were there and wide open. She was a wiry lady of middle age, with a screwed-in waist and creaking stays, a piece of crimson velvet round her long, thin neck, and scanty hair as light as ginger.

"It is she that has charge of the jewel-box," spoke Helen, when we thought it safe to begin again. "Miss Deveen is a wonderful old lady for sixty; she has come here without a maid this time, and dresses herself. I don't see what use Miss Cattledon's of to her, unless it is to act as a general refrigerator, but she gets a hundred a year salary and some of the old satins. Sophie, I'm sure she heard what we said—that we should like to steal the trinkets."

"Hope she relished it!" quoth Harry. "She'll put them under double lock and key, for fear we should break in."

It was all jesting nonsense. Amid the subdued laugh, Tod bent his face over Sophie Chalk, his hand touching the lace on her sleeve. She had on blue to-night with a pearl necklace.

"Will you sing that song for me, Miss Chalk?"

She rose and took his arm. Helen jumped up and arrested them ere they reached the piano.

"We must not have any music just now. Papa never likes it when they are at whist."

"How very unreasonable of him!" cried Tod, looking fiercely at Sir John's old red nose and steel spectacles.

"Of course it is," agreed Helen. "If he played for guinea stakes instead of sixpenny, he could not be more particular about having no noise. Let us go into the study: we can do as we like there."

We all trooped off. It was a small square room with a shabby carpet and worn horse-hair chairs. Helen stirred up the fire; and Sophie Chalk sat down on a low stool and said she'd tell us a fairy tale.

We had been there just a week when it came out. The week was good. Long walks in the frosty air; a huge swing between the cedar trees; riding by turns on the rough Welsh pony for fun; bagatelle in doors, work, music, chatter; one dinner-party, and a small dance. Half my time was spent in Bill's room. Tod seemed to find but little leisure to come up: or for anything else, except Sophie Chalk. It was a gone case with Tod: looking on, I could see that; but I don't think anybody else did, except Anna. He liked her too well to make it conspicuous. Harry made open love to her; Sir John said she was the prettiest little lady he had seen for many a day. I dare say Tod told her the same in private.

And she? Well, I don't know what to say. That she kept Tod at her side, quietly fascinating him always, was certain; but her liking for him did not appear real. To me it seemed that she was *acting* it. "I can't make that Sophie Chalk out, Tod," I said to him one day by

the beeches : "she seems childishly genuine, but I believe she's just as sharp as a steel needle." Tod laughed idly, and told me I was the simplest muf that ever trod in shoe-leather. She was no rider, and somebody had to walk by her side when she sat on the Welsh pony, holding her on at all the turnings. It was generally Tod : she made believe to be frightfully timid with *him*.

It was at the week's end the loss was discovered : Miss Deveen's emerald studs were gone. You never heard such a commotion. She, the owner, took it quietly, but Miss Cattledon rose noise enough for ten. The girls were talking round the study fire the morning after the dance and I was writing a note at the table, when Lettice Lane came in, her face white as death.

"I beg your pardon, young ladies, for asking, but have any of you seen Miss Deveen's emerald studs, please ?"

They turned round in surprise.

"Miss Deveen's studs !" exclaimed Helen. "We are not likely to have seen them, Lettice. Why do you ask ?"

"Because, Miss Helen, they are gone—that is, Miss Castledon says they are. But, with so much jewels as there is in that case, it is very easy to overlook two or three little things."

Why Lettice Jane should have shaken all over in telling this was an unexplained marvel. Her very teeth chattered. Anna enquired ; but all the answer given by the girl was, that it had "put her into a twitter." Sophie Chalk's countenance was full of compassion, and I liked her for it.

"Don't let it trouble you, Lettice," she kindly said. If the studs are missing, I dare say they will be found. Just before I came down here my sister lost a brooch from her dressing-table. The whole house was searched for it, the servants were uncomfortable——"

"And was it found, miss ?" interrupted Lettice, too eager to let her finish.

"Of course it was found. Jewels don't get hopelessly lost in gentlemen's houses. It had fallen down ; and, caught by the lace of the toilette drapery, was lying hidden within its folds."

"Oh, thank you, miss ; yes, perhaps the studs have fallen too," said Lettice Lane as she went out. Helen looked after her in some curiosity.

"Why should the loss trouble *her* ? Lettice has nothing to do with Miss Deveen's jewels."

"Look here, Helen, I wish we had never said we should like to steal the things," spoke Sophie Chalk. "It was all jest, of course, but this would not be a nice sequel to it."

"Why—yes—you did say it : some of you," cried Anna, who, till then, had seemed buried in thought, her face flushed.

"What if we did ?" retorted Helen, looking at her in some slight surprise.



Soon after this, in going up to Bill's room, I met Lettice Lane. She was running down stairs with a plate, and looked whiter than ever.

"Are the studs found, Lettice?"

"No, sir."

The answer was short, the manner scared. Helen had wondered why the loss should affect her; and so did I.

"Where's the use of your being put out over it, Lettice? You did not take them."

"No, Master Johnny, I did not; but—but—" looking all round and dropping her voice to a whisper, "I'm afraid I know who did; and it was through me. I'm a'most mad."

This was rather mysterious. She gave no opportunity for more, but ran down as though the stairs were on fire.

I went on to Bill's chamber, and found Tod and Harry with him; they were laughing over a letter from some fellow at Oxford. Standing at the window close by the inner door, which was ajar, I heard Lettice Lane go into the dressing-room and speak to Mrs. Lease in a half whisper.

"I can't bear this any longer," she said. "If you have taken those studs, for heaven's sake put them back. I'll make some excuse—say I found them under the carpet, or slipped under the drawers—anything, only put them back!"

"I don't know what you mean," replied Mrs. Lease, who always spoke as though she had but half a voice.

"Yes you do. You've got the studs."

By the pause that ensued, Nurse Lease seemed to have had her tongue struck out. Lettice took the opportunity to put it stronger.

"If you've got them about you, give them into my hand now, and I'll manage the rest. Not a living soul shall ever know of this if you will. Oh, do give them to me!"

Mrs. Lease spoke then. "If you say this again, Lettice Lane, I'll tell my lady all. And, indeed, I've been wanting to tell her ever since I heard that something was gone. It was for your sake I didn't."

"For my sake!" shrieked Lettice.

"Well, and it was. I'm sure I'd not like to say it if I could help, Lettice Lane; but it did strike me that you might have been tempted to—to—you know."

So it was accusation and counter-accusation. Which of the two confessed first was uncertain; but in a short while the whole was known to the house, and to Lady Whitney.

On the previous night the upper housemaid was in bed with some temporary illness, and it fell to Lettice Lane to put the rooms to rights after the ladies had dressed. Instead of calling one of the other servants, she asked Mrs. Lease to help her—which must have been for nothing but to gossip with the nurse, as Lady Whitney said. On Miss Deveen's

dressing-table stood her case of jewels, the key in the lock. Lettice lifted the lid. On the top tray glittered a heap of ornaments, and the two women feasted their eyes with the sight. Nurse Lease declared that she never put "a finger's end" on a single article. Lettice could not say as much. Neither (if they were to be believed) had observed the green studs; and the upper tray was not lifted to show what was underneath. Miss Cattledon, who made one at the uproar, put in her word at this, to say they were telling a falsehood, and her face had enough vinegar in it to pickle a salmon. Other people might like Miss Cattledon, but I did not. She was in a silent rage with Miss Deveen for having chosen to keep the jewel-case herself during their stay at Whitney Hall, and for carelessly leaving the key in it. Miss Deveen took this loss calmly, and was cool as a water-melon.

"I don't know that the emerald studs were in the upper tray last night; I don't remember to have seen them," she said, as if bearing out the assertion of the two women.

"Begging your pardon, madam, they *were* there," stiffly corrected Miss Cattledon. "I saw them. I thought you would put them on, as you were going to wear your green satin gown, and asked if I should lay them out; but you told me you would choose for yourself."

Miss Deveen had worn diamonds; we noticed their lustre.

"I'm sure it is a dreadful thing to have happened!" said poor Lady Whitney, looking as flustered as a scared cow. "I dare not tell Sir John; he would storm the windows out of their frames. Lease, I am astonished at *you*. How could you dare open the box?"

"I never did open it, my lady," was the answer. "When I got round from the bed, Lettice was standing with it open before her."

"I don't think there need be much doubt as to the guilty party," struck in Miss Cattledon with intense acrimony, as her eyes went swooping down upon Lettice. And if they were not sly and crafty eyes, never you trust me again.

"I do not think there need be so much trouble," corrected Miss Deveen. "It is not your loss, Cattledon—it's mine: and my own fault too."

But Miss Cattledon would not take the hint. She stuck to it like a leech, and sifted evidence as subtly as an Old Bailey lawyer. Mrs. Lease carried innocence on the surface; no one could doubt it: Lettice might have been taken for a seven-years' thief. She sobbed, and choked, and rambled in her tale, and grew as confused as a hunted hare, contradicting herself at every second word. The Australian scheme (though it might have been nothing but foolish talk), told against her now.

Things grew more uncomfortable as the day went on, the house being ransacked from head to foot. Sophie Chalk cried. She was not rich, she said to me, but she'd give every shilling of money she had

with her for the studs to be found; and she thought it was very wrong to accuse Lettice, when so many strangers had been in the house. I liked Sophie better than I had liked her yet: she looked regularly vexed.

Sir John got to know of it: Miss Cattledon told him. He did not storm the windows out, but he said the police must come to see to Lettice Lane. Miss Deveen, hearing of this, went straight to Sir John, and assured him that if he took any serious steps while the affair was so doubtful, she would quit his house on the instant, and never put foot in it again. He retorted that it must have been Lettice Lane—common sense and Miss Cattledon could not be mistaken—and that it ought to be investigated.

They came to a compromise. Lettice was not to be given into custody at present; but she must quit the hall. That, said Miss Deveen, was, of course, as Sir John and Lady Whitney pleased. To tell the truth, suspicion did seem strong against her.

She went away at eventide. One of the men was charged to drive her to her mother's, about five miles off. I and Anna, hastening home from our walk—for we had lost the others, and the stars were coming out in the cold sky—saw them as we passed the beeches. Lettice's face was swollen with crying.

"We are so sorry this has happened, Lettice," Anna gently said, going to the gig. "I do hope it will be cleared up soon. Remember one thing—I shall think well of you until it is."

"I am turned out like a criminal, Miss Anna," sobbed the girl. "They searched me to the skin; that Miss Cattledon standing on to see that the housekeeper did it properly; and they've searched my boxes. The only one to speak a kind word to me, as I came away, was Miss Deveen herself. It's a disgrace that I shall never get over."

"That's rubbish, Lettice, you know,"—for I thought I'd put in a good word, too. "You'll soon forget it, once the right fellow is pitched upon. Good luck to you, Lettice."

Anna shook hands with her, and the man drove on, Lettice sobbing aloud. Not hearing Anna's footsteps, I looked round and saw she had sat down on one of the benches, though it was white with frost. I went back.

"Don't you go and catch cold, Anna."

"Johnny, you can't think how this is troubling *me*."

"Why you—in particular?"

"Well—for one thing I can't believe that she's guilty. I've always liked Lettice."

"So did we at Dyke Manor. But if she's not guilty, who is?"

"I don't know, Johnny," she continued, her eyes taking a far-off, thoughtful look. "What I can't help thinking, is this—though I feel half ashamed to say it. Several visitors were in the house last night;

suppose one should have found her way into the room, and taken them? If so, how cruel this must be on Lettice Lane."

"Sophie Chalk suggested the same thing to me to-day. But a visitor would not do such a thing. Fancy a lady stealing jewels!"

"The open box might prove a strong temptation. People do things in such moments, Johnny, that they'd fly from at other times."

"Sophie said that too. You have been talking together."

"I have not exchanged a word with Sophie Chalk on the subject. The ideas might occur naturally to any of us."

I did not think it at all likely to have been a visitor. How should a visitor know there was a jewel-box open in Miss Deveen's room? The chamber, too, was an inner one, and therefore not liable to be entered accidentally. To get to it you had to go through Miss Cattledon's.

"The room is not easy of access, you know, Anna."

"Not very. But it might be reached."

"I say, are you saying this for any reason?"

She turned round and looked at me rather sharply.

"Yes. Because I don't believe it was Lettice Lane."

"Was it Miss Cattledon herself, Anna? I have heard of such like curious things. Her eyes took a greedy look to-day when they rested on the jewels."

As if the suggestion frightened her—and I hardly know how I came to whisper it—Anna started up, and ran across the lawn to the house, never looking back or stopping.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

(*To be continued.*)



## THE BIRD CARADRION.

**I**N a darkened room, by the bedside of a dying man, sat a woman. She had not counted more than some five-and-twenty summers, though to-day she might have passed for years older, so sad and woe-begone was her aspect. And who could wonder? for the sick man she tended was her fondly loved husband: and he, alas, was dying!

The Doctor shook his head mournfully whenever she asked, again and again, "Tell me, oh tell, will he live?"

There seemed indeed no hope; the young creature now sat mute, petrified with grief, and he who erewhile had been strong and sturdy, lay motionless and still. It was scarcely possible to tell if life yet dwelt in the body. His breathing was so faint, it hardly dimmed the glass they held before his mouth.

"He sleeps," spoke the Doctor, who had just entered softly. "Go down, dear child, and rest," he said, turning to the watcher.

In very truth he deemed the patient was about to pass from earthly slumber to heavenly repose, and wished to save her the sad sight.

"Then I shall rest beside him," she answered, resolutely.

The Doctor did not reply, and quitted the sick-room with hushed steps.

Still the invalid stirred not, but lay on in that condition of neither life nor death. At last the wife rose from her seat, and approaching the darkened window, lifted a corner of the blind. Within the room all was oppressive stillness, gloom, and sorrow; without, there was life, light, and joy. It was spring. The trees wore their greenest and prettiest garb; pale primroses and white daisies pied the earth; the scent of violets filled the air; the fruit-trees stood in fullest, snowy blossom. Below in the little garden on which the window looked, two children—a little girl of five years old, with long flaxen curls, that shimmered in the sunshine, and her baby brother—were at play on the soft, green sward. The little one was crowing merrily at the elder's antics, holding out his chubby, fair arms as though he would seize all this pleasure within them. Their nurse stood beside, looking down with a grave, sad face.

"Hush! Miss Effie," she said, as the merriment grew too boisterous; "hush! or you will awaken poor papa."

"Poor papa!" repeated the child, and she was silent for a moment. But soon the game recommenced, only more quietly than before. For what knew the little one of heart-sorrow, or sickness unto death? The wife surveyed the scene, and she heaved a heavy sigh.

"They are glad and happy, they enjoy the sunshine of spring," she



murmured; "meanwhile their father is dying." Her tones were half bitter and reproachful, though full of tenderness.

She let the corner of the blind drop once more. The sight had done her no good, it had rather torn her wounds afresh. The gloom and darkness of the sick-chamber better suited her frame of mind.

So the day passed. The children, tired out with play and laughter, rested in their cots. The mother went into the nursery, and with saddened mien bent over each little bed to give her wonted evening kiss. Effie sprang up when she saw her approach.

"Here is a kiss for poor papa," she whispered, as she encircled her mother's neck with her chubby soft arms. "Do you know, mamma, the story he used to tell us about the bird with the hard name? I can't remember it."

"What bird, my child?" asked the mother, listlessly. Her thoughts were wandering, and she hardly took in what the little girl said.

"Car—Car—something mamma. That wonderful bird papa told me the pretty story about; how it came to make sick people well, and flew away with their illness."

"Caradrion," said the mother. Her attention was awakened, and she remembered to what Effie referred.

It was a legend the father had often told the child, one that he himself had read in the old chronicles of a monastery; a story full of deep poetry and feeling. It was anent that bird, that wondrous bird that we possess not, that no land can call its own, but which on clear midnights flies high aloft above our heads, touching the portals of Heaven with its pinions. Men name it Caradrion. Whenever this bird lowers its wings towards earth, a sick man is made whole.

"What of that bird, Effie?" asked the mother.

The child hung her head shyly, and would not reply. At last she whispered: "Mamma, I have been praying God to send down Caradrion to poor papa; now he is sure to get well, so don't look so sad any more, dear mamma."

The tears welled into the mother's eyes. She could not speak. Alas! she feared the father was already beyond all hope of recovery, and that the end would come ere those sweet blue eyes re-opened from sleep.

"Good night, Effie, good night," she sobbed, as she replaced the child in its small white cot, and hastily left the room.

There was no change in the sick man; he still bore the same stony, immoveable look.

"Is there any alteration?" she asked the Doctor, when he came for the last time that night to see his patient.

"None," he said.

"And you can do nothing?"

"Nothing; we must leave nature alone. Stay, open the window a little; the air cannot harm him."

She did as he bade.

It was a soft warm night, the sweet-scented air from without filled the room. There was no moon. The heavens were studded with stars, and their mild light shone down upon the earth. There seemed more pity in this scene than in the one she had beheld that morn. This time she did not turn away. Some of its peace seemed to sink into the wife's breaking heart, and led her thoughts wandering into the past. She thought of her young love for the man who now lay stricken and helpless, of the few years of happiness she had spent at his side; and then she could pursue the vein no further. "Surely, surely," she cried in heart-anguish, "joy does not come to die so soon!" She turned her mind away from the all-engrossing topic, and let her ideas wander dreamily; her long-continued watches had tired her mentally and bodily. She knew not why, or wherefore, except, perchance, that Effie's question had recalled the old story with new vividness, but her thoughts ran on about that bird of health. Should he descend this night, whom of those that lay ill on earth would he elect to benefit? For in this vast world of sorrow and sickness, how many lay stricken besides *her* husband; the darlings of other hearts might be dying? How then would the bird choose between them? How tell which life was needful still on earth; which meet for Heaven!

And still the sick man lay motionless.

As the young wife sat thus, lost in deep reverie, the hours wore on. At last she was roused by a sound from without, as of the rushing of mighty wings. It came nearer, nearer, ever nearer; it seemed to approach where she sat.

"It is Death who comes thus, 'twixt gloaming and dawn to seek his prize," thought the wife, and her heart turned faint and sick.

Still the rushing continued: it came closer, closer. She listened breathless and awe-stricken. Suddenly a huge bird flew in through the open window; unheeding her, he winged straight towards the bed, and there alighted and rested him from his flight. His mien was lordly, as of an eagle; his plumage, white as a swan's; his movements, gentle as a dove's. It was the bird Caradrion.

The wife sat on in awed silence; she dared not speak or move. But hope began once more to beat within her heart: she laid her hand upon it to quiet its beating; it pulsed so loudly she feared lest the sound might scare the bird. Immoveably her eyes were fixed upon him as he bowed his long, slender neck towards the sufferer, and laid his broad beak upon the sick man's lips. For several seconds of breathless anxiety to the watcher it rested there, as the bird drew forth the sore ailment unto himself. That ended, he once more flew away. On, on, with the same rushing sound wherewith he had come; on, on, till it grew fainter as he fled further from earth. The wife saw him mount higher and higher, as he darted heavenward.

She could not cease to follow his flight, her eyes were spell-bound on his departing form; for, as yet, the cure was not wholly wrought, she knew; and who could say that it might not fail even now? So she continued gazing, and as she looked, the stars' light grew fainter, then faded quite. A rosy shimmer suffused the east; at last, in fiery splendour, uprose the sun from behind a bank of gorgeous-tinted clouds. He had returned yet again from his nightly slumber in the bosom of Paradise. And still the bird was flying on, till his form grew a mere speck in the distance; he had neared the sun, and darted within its flaming circle. Then she who watched so eagerly, could see no more; the glare was too fierce for mortal eyes; they might penetrate no further. But she knew that Caradrion had taken away her loved one's sickness, that he was purifying himself anew in the eternal light, that her husband was saved.

"My darling," called a low voice, "where are you?" They were the first words the sufferer had spoken for many a day, and fell like music on the wife's ear. She hurried towards the bed, and fell on her knees beside it, bathed in tears. He laid his worn, wasted hand tenderly upon her head.

"I feel better than for weeks past—only weak, very weak. Do not weep, love. Let me be carried into the garden, in the sweet fresh air, among the spring flowers. I shall soon grow strong."

"In a few hours," she said, "when the sun has risen quite, and the dews are gone. Rest till then."

Later in the day they placed him on the grass, swathed in warm rugs, and propped with pillows. And there he lay, day by day, delighting in the air and golden sunshine, in the flowers, and songs of birds. As he grew stronger, they let his children come to him. Effie threw her arms round her father's neck when she saw him for the first time.

"I have a secret to tell you, papa," she whispered. "You must not tell nurse, she says it is nonsense; I have told mamma, and she only cried."

"Well, and what is this secret, little one?" asked the father, gaily.

"I prayed Caradrion might come to make you well, and I feel sure he did, for you are better since that night. Did he come? Tell me, papa dear."

The father kissed the sweet face and pressed the child fondly to him. Neither he nor his wife spoke a word. There are moments for which this our mortal speech has no words.

As for Effie, she will find the answer to her question beyond this life.

## WORCESTER RAILWAY STATION.

*JULY*, 1869, but anything but July weather. Cold, dull, and cloudy as November. Waiting at the small branch station, we said so to one another, and wondered when the fruit and the corn would ripen. The fresh sweet smell of the hay came wafted from many sides, as it was turned about by the haymakers, and of that there was a fine and ample crop.

I looked at the way-bill, hanging on the wall. "Bromsgrove, Stoke, Droitwich, Fearnall Heath, Worcester." Then was drawn a thick, black line; and below it, beginning again, came "Great Malvern," and other places. The black line (as I understood it, but I don't pretend to any sense in such matters) intimating that those who wanted to get to Malvern must change at Worcester, and take a fresh ticket.

The train came up, and it whirled me away. To Bromsgrove first, and thence onward. Before we reached Worcester, the guard came to collect the tickets.

"I want to go on to Malvern. I have my ticket only to Worcester."

"All right," he civilly said. "You'll have time to get a fresh ticket before the Malvern train starts."

"Does this train go to Malvern?"

"No. This goes right on to Bristol."

Worcester station, Shrub Hill, and in to time, seventeen minutes past eleven. A porter came to the carriage-door and took my travelling-bag.

"When does the Malvern train start?"

"In five or six minutes," he answered.

"I must cross the line at once, I suppose, to get my ticket?"

"Have you not got your ticket? A through ticket?"

"No."

"Then you can't go on."

"Not go on!"

"Not by this here next Malvern train. You'll have to wait till twelve-twenty; rather more than an hour."

"But why can I not go on by it?"

"Because they won't book you here."

"But I must go on by it. I will go on by it!"

The man shook his head, and showed me the safe way to cross the line, himself preferring danger and the rails. We met on the platform on the other side, close by the book-stall. He was as civil as he could be, seemed really sorry, but very obdurate.

"Which is the Malvern train?"

"That's it," pointing to one that was waiting farther off.

"And you tell me that I may not take a seat in it?"

"Couldn't be allowed to."

"For what reason?"

The man held his tongue, afraid or ashamed to speak. A bystander, evidently not labouring under the same modesty, thought it as well to enlighten me.

"The two companies that go halves in this station have quarrelled," he said. "The train, about to start for Malvern, belongs to the Great Western: you came by the Midland, and so they'll not let you go on by it."

"But suppose I had booked myself through to Malvern? I find I could have done it."

"Then they'd not dare to hinder your going on. As you've not got a through ticket, they do. That's where lots of folks get caught. You should hear the grumbling at this station some days. It was only yesterday that ever was, a large family were stopped going on just as you are."

"Suppose I were an inhabitant of Worcester: do you tell me that I could not, in that case, walk up to the station and book myself to go on to Malvern by this waiting train?"

"No: they'll not let you."

With the train of carriages before my eyes, awaiting its time to start, the words seemed incomprehensible: a state of things not to be understood.

"But why?"

"Because the companies are spitting against each other."

"Show me the booking-office."

The ticket places were side by side. Two of them. One square hole with "Great Western Booking-office," written over it, the other with "Midland Booking-office." Both were closed now, hermetically shut up, until the said Malvern train should be off.

It was enough to make a saint savage. "Is there *no* one I can appeal to?" I asked, looking round in desperation. "No one in authority?"

"There's the inspector."

The inspector came forward, a band on his cap to show who he was, with the word written on it. I stated my case to him.

No, he civilly answered, he could do nothing for me. I could not go on by that train.

"I have come to Worcester for but a few hours; of those, I wish to spend one in Malvern. It is important that I should. If you do not let me go on by this train, I may not be able to go at all."

"You can't go on by this."



"Why, I ask?"

"You can't book."

"Very well: I will pay at Malvern."

"No, that mayn't be."

"What is to hinder my taking a place in one of those carriages? I don't mind what they charge me at my journey's end."

"But I tell you that you can't," said the inspector, flatly. "Unless passengers bring a through ticket, they are not allowed to go on by that train."

"And if I had brought a through ticket in my hand, I should have been allowed to go on by it?"

"Yes."

"It is the strangest state of affairs I ever had the fortune to meet with."

The inspector moved away, making no comment. A strong-minded traveller would have stepped into one of the carriages and sat down, daring them to remove him. But the result might have been a disturbance, and defeat at last.

"I wonder what Worcester thinks of itself?"

"Yes, I wonder too what it thinks of itself," struck in a voice from one of the sympathising bystanders; and, I do honestly say that every one appeared to sympathise exactly as though it were a personal wrong. "Leastways the two railway companies: it isn't Worcester, it's them. They ought to be ashamed to treat the public so; and all to gratify their petty spite! Just look here—" stepping inside the first-class ladies' waiting-room, at the door of which we happened to be standing—"take a glance round *this*. Look at its miserable sofas; look at its shabbiness; above all, look at its dirt: you may taste it and smell it, as well as see it. We can't remember when it was cleaned."

"But why don't you get it cleaned?"

"Why! why because these two precious companies, the Midland and the Great Western will neither of 'em say it is to be done: what the one orders, the other countermands. *Do* look at the carpet!"

Scanning the ins and outs of the room, the corners and angles of the carpet, I had a great mind to tell of a case I read in the public journals only the previous week. Where a lady, thrown down by a hole in an old carpet in a waiting-room, had brought an action against a railway company, and obtained substantial damages. But it was nothing to me.

"You might rake the dirt here up in your fingers! It's no better than a pig-sty. If we don't get it cleaned before the festival, I'd like to know what the ladies will do with their dresses. You should see the fashion that comes here."

"Any passengers for Great Malvern? Any passengers for Great Malvern?"

Out I went at the shout. The train had its doors open now, ready for travellers to take places; the porter was calling out the invitation up and down the platform.

"Yes, I am for Great Malvern; but you will not let me go."

The man shook his head. My grievance had become public property.

I put it to the reader—whether it was tantalizing. I put it further—ought such a state of things to be? The nearly empty train stood with its doors open, and might not convey me the short distance to Great Malvern, because its directors and the other directors were living like cat and dog.

One last appeal. "Surely you can stretch a point in this solitary case, and let me go! It is of great consequence to me. I will pay double fare: one to each company."

Bang went the doors, shriek went the whistle, and the nearly passenger-less train steamed on, as my only answer. Another hearty bystander gave a derisive laugh—not meant for me.

"*They* let you go on! no, not if you paid 'em triple. Why—would you believe it? If you want to go by the rival company to Droitwich, they can't hinder your going, but they force you to pay the fare to Stoke. The vagaries of this here station makes it a laughing-stock to strangers."

"If I don't say a word of this somewhere or other, may the Faithful City call me false for ever!" ran through my humiliated mind, as I sat waiting for the long and vexatious hour to pass.

Twenty minutes past twelve, at last! and a train that I was graciously permitted to go on by. Malvern was soon in view, but the hills were cloudy, the atmosphere dull. Not that it was the hills I went that day to see.

Great Malvern Station. Smarting under the Worcester treatment, it might be as well to make myself sure of a train here to get back by. The delay had frustrated my plans, and it really did not much matter now at what hour of the afternoon that might be. But the porter I spoke to seemed to know very little. "There was ill-blood between the two companies at Worcester, and a bit of a bother. All the trains starting, wouldn't take passengers unless they belonged to 'em."

Unable to make much of this, I found out for myself (studying the hanging way-bills) that the return might be accomplished between four and five o'clock.

"Look here," pointing to the paper. "I can return by this one."

The porter looked uncertain. "That there won't take you to Shrub Hill. It only stops at Foregate Street."

"So much the better."

"That train don't stop at Worcester at all," interposed another porter.

"It do."

"It don't."

"Tell ye it stops at Foregate Street. The bill says so."

The bill did say so. "I'll be here for it," I said to myself.

And accordingly I was there. My mission at Malvern being accomplished, and a walk to St. Ann's Well cut short midway by the rain, the station was regained early, in one of the fiercest showers the clouds ever poured down. If I never compassionated a fly-driver before, I did then. Malvern had looked miserable: the sheltering station was a relief to the eyes.

It was getting towards the time I thought my train ought to be up, when one steamed in. Was it mine? I went to a porter: one I had not experienced the previous gratification of seeing.

"I am going to Worcester. Will you tell me whether this is the right train?"

"It might be."

The man's answer was given in the most surly tone conceivable, and for no cause. The one used to him had been—I'm sure—a model of courtesy.

"Is it my train?"

"I suppose it might take y'u to Worcester if y'u want to go," came the unwilling reply. But the purposely indifferent, rude, *insulting* manner in which it was spoken could not be rendered in writing.

The train was on the point of departing. I did not know what to do—get in, or not. The friend, who had come with me to the station, approached.

"I don't think it is of much use to ask the porters. They have the character of being very churlish: there has been lately some outcry about it."

"But who am I to ask? How am I to know whether it is my train or not? I *must* get back to Worcester."

At the moment there came into view a man with "Inspector" written on his cap. To me he was welcome as sunshine in harvest.

"Does this train stop at Worcester?"

"No. One that does will be up in two or three minutes."

With the man's civil words ringing in my ears, I went to look for the porter, and found him.

"How came you to tell me that train would take me to Worcester?"

"Ugh!" And if the answer is unintelligible to the reader, it was as much so to me.

"Don't you think, as porter at the station, it might be as well for you to be sure whither a train is bound, before giving an answer? Suppose I had gone by it?—and I might have done so but for seeing the inspector."

The porter coolly looked up the platform and down the platform,

and then walked slowly away to disappear behind it. Which was all the further notice he condescended to take.

And, so far, I give you my experience of a recent visit to Worcester and Malvern. It is quite worthy of being printed.

London, July 1869.

BEYOND THE TIDE.

We read that beyond Death's dreary tide  
Is a land so light that it needs no sun ;  
Where the gates of pearl stand open wide  
Through a Sabbath-day that is never done.

We read that no pain can ever smite  
The dwellers upon that glorious shore ;  
No dying is there, nor sin's sad blight,  
And their tears are wiped for evermore.

It is very lonely this side the flood  
When those we loved have meekly died ;  
And in the silence of our abode  
We listen for sounds from beyond the tide.

We know that their home is a wondrous land,  
And we stand on the River's stormy side ;  
Oh say, if upon this earthly strand  
There may float no sign from beyond the tide ?

Where is the angel who rolled the stone  
From the sepulchre ? Is the gulf so wide  
That they only crossed to the Holy One,  
And never again from beyond the tide ?

## OUR ARTIST IN WINDOWS.

## I.

HOW we first came to go to the glass-staining factory I hardly remember. Some one mentioned the place, and then some one else mentioned it again with a word of interest. Then a new window was put in our church, bearing a wonderfully quaint and sweet design of the Saviour as a child. Our senior warden had seen the original drawing at the factory. Suddenly Cecile seemed seized with the greatest desire to visit the works: she said it was a shame, when there was a place of such importance in the town, that we should know nothing about it. After that, Jo read an article somewhere on mediæval architecture and saints, which made her feel interested too; so at last it happened, without any special thought on my part, that one afternoon we stood hesitating before the half-open factory door.

"Shall we enter?" I asked, feeling for the moment a strange reluctance.

"Oh, yes, Miss Burney," said Cecile, in her languid, decisive way; "we will go on now, no matter what it costs." And lifting her hand she knocked at the door.

One of the workmen turned and bade us enter. We told him our errand; and, as there was no proprietor or foreman present, he offered with rude courtesy to explain things to us a little. This was a busy room; the men in it were cutting glass into all sorts of shapes that could be used—rounds and arches, circles, diamonds, and parallelograms. Our guide explained to us that these, after they were stained and the colours burnt in, would be fastened together with slender links of metal, and so composed into windows. Then he led us to the more intricate department, where skilful workmen were transferring the outlines of ecclesiastical designs to these shapes of glass, and laying on the colours which were next to be made fast by fire. After that we visited the kiln or oven, glowing with perpetual heat. Jo asked a great many questions, which the man obligingly answered, and at last, spying a heap of broken glass in a corner, she stooped down to it, and began to examine the pieces.

"May I have some of these bits?" she asked, eagerly, holding up a deep blue one, and looking through it at the sun.

"Certainly," said the man, smiling; "take as many as you please. The children often come to ask for them, but young ladies seldom care for such things."



"Oh! I think they are lovely!" cried Jo, with enthusiasm: and she gathered up fragments of purple and crimson, and intense azure.

I heard a window-shutter open, and our guide glanced upwards.

"But," said Cecile's soft voice, "where do you get your first designs for your pictures on glass? Are those also done in the factory?"

"Yes, miss," answered the workman; "we have our own artist. He makes the designs in a room upstairs. He is the best we ever had."

The man spoke warmly, as if he felt a personal friendship for the artist.

"Might we not visit his room?" asked Cecile, in a persistent sort of way. "Will he think it an intrusion?"

Our guide glanced upwards again. Jo, unheeding our talk, was just holding up to the light a broken diamond she had found, with a yellow oak-leaf on it.

"I think we may venture to try," said our guide, cheerfully; "though he does not often receive visitors."

So we called Jo, and then all went into the building, groping one by one up a dark flight of stairs. Cecile made me walk first, as being chaperon, but I hardly realized where we were ascending, or why. At the landing, our guide paused and knocked; then opening the door ushered us in, and withdrew.

The room was large and light. From a sort of confusion of things by the window, a young man came to meet us, with a pleasant welcome in his face and voice, as he asked in what way he could serve us.

He wore a blue jacket, which gave him a sailor-like air, and his hair was tumbled, as if he had been running his fingers through it. Wavy brown hair it was: and he had a half dreamy, half keen look in his gray eyes, such as I used to see years ago in the eyes of a hero of my youth. Either this, or something in his manner, took me by surprise, and I could think of only the most commonplace words to tell him that we should like to see his designs, and to learn a little about them.

He glanced past me at Cecile. That was a way people always had of doing, even when she was my pupil, and I kept her mind full of lessons. Now that she was emancipated, and become a ruler herself in the small world, the little gray governess might well be content to keep in the background, and console herself with honest, plain Jo, who had scarcely outgrown books and tasks. Cecile was our beauty, large and fair, slow and stately; one could watch her a long time in silence, like a statue or a painting. She never said much: there seemed to be no need that she should; people were always falling in love with her, and she flirted indolently right and left without taking any trouble at all about it. Our beauty seemed rather bored with life sometimes, but we made much of her, and smoothed her way as far as we could.

The artist glanced past at her. She stood in the sunshine like a

queen, her rich silk and India shawl draping her right royally, and a delicate pink was creeping into her cheeks like that of apple-blossoms. There was a slight look of animation about her too, which I had often thought the only thing lacking to make the beauty of her face perfect.

"Pardon me," he said, after an instant, "you made me think of a painting of Bathsheba I once saw. Come this way, ladies, and I will show you any of my designs that you care to look at."

He had drawn them on great sheets of creamy tinted paper almost as thick as parchment. They were mere outlines sketched with charcoal, but the whole spirit of the thing was there, and much more powerful and suggestive than if done with fine-pointed pencils, toned and shaded to the minutest perfection. He unrolled one after another, holding each before us for a moment. First there was St. Peter with the keys.

"How fine!" murmured Cecile. He rolled it up and then brought out another—St. Andrew with the few fishes that were to feed the multitude.

"Very charming," said Cecile, letting a slow, lingering glance of her beautiful eyes fall upon the artist; and she had her word of praise ready for each picture in its turn. There was Lazarus just risen, and still bound with the grave-clothes, ghastly, yet rejoicing. There was John the Baptist, with his leathern girdle and raiment of camels' hair; there was Mary, who sat at the Saviour's feet, and that other Mary, with unbound hair, penitent, and bearing her box of precious ointment. These were all so simply, quaintly, forcibly sketched, like old carvings where there is not a line to spare; and then the round, solid ring of halo behind each saint's head was so unlike what it represented, and yet expressed it so perfectly, that there grew to be a charm in watching for unexpected severities of outline; and the most antique, and at first glance, ungraceful, came to seem the most to be admired.

He unrolled and held before us one of his largest designs: Christ Blessing the Little Children. It was instinct with majesty and sweetness.

"How very charming!" murmured Cecile, making an effort to comprehend it artistically, and poising her chin upon her exquisite hand.

"Oh, how beautiful! how beautiful!" exclaimed Jo, pressing forward; "just see, Miss Burney, the dear little, pure, baby faces, not afraid to look up at Him! Their very robes look pure—how can such straight, stiff lines seem to mean so much! I should think it would be like being in a cathedral all the time, and worshipping, when one does such things as these!"

The artist smiled, and unrolled another picture where the Madonna appeared, leading the children, Jesus and John, with that ineffable look of holy innocence in the faces of the three. Jo held her hands tight

together in an ecstasy, and Cecile in her soft lingering accents, said :  
"What a wonderful genius you must be, Mr. Hunter !"

It occurred to me as singular that she should know his name, but I supposed the workman who had been our guide must have mentioned it when I was not paying attention.

He was taking down one or two others, and carelessly unrolling them.

"How very beautiful !" said Cecile in her lady-like monotone.

"Why, what a difference between this and the others !" exclaimed

Jo. "I do not like it as well. Is this your design too, Mr. Hunter ?"

He looked pleased at her quick discernment.

"No," he said, "this was done by my predecessor. He always drew in the modern style, but I prefer, for my own part, the mediæval and antique."

"So do I," said Jo, heartily ; "this one is yours, I know. The dear little cherubs look as if they were shouting praises with those open mouths and rapt eyes !"

"You paint on canvas, sometimes, do you not, Mr. Hunter, besides sketching these paper pictures ?" asked Cecile, slowly raising her eyes to his.

The slightest tinge of colour seemed to come into his face as he answered, modestly—"I do a little in that way sometimes. I keep my easel over by that corner window."

And stepping to it, he lifted off some light covering that had lain over it, and allowed us to see the half finished painting. It was the face of a fair, queenly woman, with dreamy languor in her eyes, and a careless sweetness in the curve of her lip. Her hair had half escaped in ripples from the close Greek fillet, and in her hands she held red lilies.

"Why," said Jo, after a little pause, "I think she looks something like you, Cecile !"

"It is meant for Helen of Troy," said the young man, quietly replacing the covering.

Cecile was all in a flutter for a moment ; the colour rose in her face and she pulled her shawl a little nervously about her shoulders ; but it all passed before I had time to wonder whether she found the room too warm, or whether she was vexed because she looked like Helen of Troy. But it was a beautifully painted picture.

## II.

CECILE being no longer under my especial care, I frequently only knew of her guests and her plans by the fragments of each day's sayings and doings that floated to me. I was almost all the time with Jo and the little ones. But I confess to being rather surprised when one day Jo came into the school-room and told me that Mr. Hunter was below in

the library with Cecile. She had heard his voice and seen him as she passed the open door. It startled me for a moment ; I had not thought of our visit to the factory being foundation enough for future acquaintance.

But it was a visit that had not been soon forgotten. Jo had hunted up an old, curious book of illuminations, which, if not the work of some pious monk himself, must have been done by a very clever imitator. Jo pored over it and delighted in it, and really began to gain a new impetus in her own graceful drawing : sketching windows in Gothic arches, with diamond panes encircling some fair cherub face in the centre. She had put her broken pieces of stained glass up in her own room, where the sun shone through them and made tinted lights.

That day, after Jo came in and told me that Mr. Hunter was downstairs with Cecile, we got out our books to read history, as it was the usual hour, and the afternoon being warm and sunny, we betook ourselves to the summer-house in the garden. We were growing very much excited over a graphic account of the meeting of the two queens Elizabeth and Mary, in the garden at Fotheringay, when steps came down the path towards us, and there was a sudden meeting in our own garden. Cecile and Mr. Hunter came into the midst of our group, and the smaller forces dispersed.

"I am sure I did not know you people were out here," said Cecile.

"But I am very glad you are here, very glad to meet you again," said the artist, shaking hands with Jo and me. There was no knit jacket to-day ; no tumbled hair ; in every point of dress and manner, Mr. Hunter appeared before us as genuine a gentleman as any in the land.

"Miss Dormer kindly invited me to call," he said, turning his cool, gray eyes full upon Cecile as he spoke ; "and as we had a short but pleasant acquaintance at the Lakes a year ago, I felt justified in yielding to the temptation now."

"One of Cecile's old flirtations !" I thought to myself, feeling a little vexed, I hardly knew why, for it had been rather our custom to be proud of the number of our beauty's conquests. But this one seemed singular ; for why had they met so coolly at the glass-works without any allusion to their earlier acquaintance ?

"Did you know each other before ?" asked Jo, glancing from the artist to her sister ; "why did you not tell me, Cecile ? for then I should have felt privileged to ask Mr. Hunter if he could not give me some more broken pieces of glass."

"Pieces of glass !" exclaimed the young man.

"Yes, with all the beautiful colours in them, you know ; and perhaps you could have found me some with a head, or a hand, or a lily not quite all broken, which would be of no use in the factory. I should be so glad to have them !"

"You shall," said Mr Hunter, smiling brightly. "I will look some

up on purpose and bring them to you. I remember, when I was a boy, nothing delighted me so much as gathering up the fragments of stained glass that the workmen let me have. I made kaleidoscopes of them, and they helped me to study effects of colour."

"Oh, thank you!" said Jo. "I mean to make transparencies of mine; one for Miss Burney, one for Cecile, and one for me." And she turned towards her sister.

Cecile was gathering ferns; she fastened two or three in Jo's dark hair. Jo looked at her fondly.

"What a brown, brown hand mine is against yours!" she said, with a caressing touch on the soft white fingers.

"There are shades of white," remarked Mr. Hunter; "at least my sister Flora used to say so, when she went out shopping to match worsteds."

"That is true," said Cecile; "I have worked a great deal on canvas."

Mr. Hunter shortly after took his departure, and Cecile went back to the house, leaving Jo and me to finish our history, and the account of the queens at Fotheringay. We hurried through it all, and then Jo carried the books away, leaving me in the summer-house, in a thoughtful mood, pondering over my pupils and my responsibility.

Mrs. Dormer had died three years before, but I had gone on keeping my old place as governess in the family ever since, and in default of daughter or sister of my own, my heart was fain during these long years to cling, with whatever affection it had left, to these girls and to my younger charges.

Mr. Dormer was a good-natured man, absorbed in business. We went on in a quiet, contented way, as a general thing, except when Mr. Dormer's sister came down upon us for one of her semi-annual visits. She would wake us up, scold us, and criticise us, and give us new notions; and then sweep away again; usually carrying Cecile off with her for a month of gay life in some town or summer resort. After that we would once more settle down into quiet. I had seldom had cause to feel any far-reaching anxiety about my dear girls, but on this day I got to thinking rather gravely how terrible it would be if, through any inefficiency of mine, harm or sorrow should come into their young lives.

But what was there particularly to be done? I went back to the house and tried to satisfy myself by working all the evening on a lovely puffed berthe for Cecile, and setting Jo a double lesson in mathematics.

"I don't know," said Cecile, a few days after, tapping the table thoughtfully, with her white fingers—"I don't know whether to stay at home, lie on the sofa and read that last novel, or whether to go over to Mrs. Dawson's and learn her new pattern. On the whole, I think I will go to Mrs. Dawson's, and you need not wait lunch for me, Miss Burney."

So she made a packet of her worsteds and huge crochet-needle,



threw on her shawl carelessly, yet so that it seemed to become of itself a classic drapery, put a veil over her head Spanish fashion, and sallied forth, slow and graceful, with

"A colour in her cheek and a light within her eye."

My pupils in the school-room upstairs plodded away faithfully at their lessons, till all were finished, and then the boys, with a whoop and hurrah, whistled for the dog, and rushed off on a forest expedition. Jo and I went down to the verandah—she with her old book of illuminations, I with my sewing; and there we sat in the shadow of the vines enjoying the lovely summer day.

It was an interruption when we heard the gate open, and a footfall on the gravelled walk. But it was Mr. Hunter, and he looked so honestly glad to see us, and carried a jagged parcel so promising of delight to Jo, that I forgave him on the spot for breaking up our little dream of rest.

"What is that? A missal?" he asked, seeing the book Jo held. And then he sat down by her on the step, and looked at the quaint designs in corner and margin, as she turned over leaf after leaf. "See that grave old monk at the door of his cell, looking upwards," said he; "isn't that well done?"

"And there is what he is looking up at," replied Jo; "that little bird's-nest in among the vine-branches, and the bird's mouth wide open singing. I suppose it makes him think of praise."

"Ah, there is Santa Maria," remarked the young man, as she turned another leaf.

"And oh, look!" cried Jo, enthusiastically, "see the row of little white lilies all wrought into the hem of her garment. I never noticed that before. Isn't it beautiful?"

"But what is this?" asked Mr. Hunter, as something came fluttering down to the ground from the leaves of the book. He picked it up.

"Oh," said Jo, looking at it, "that is where I tried to copy a head of St. John. But it isn't good. I made a failure of it."

"It is good," he answered, holding it off for a critical glance. "I might have known you would draw. If you had been a nun, you would have made a missal yourself, I am sure."

"Yes, I should have liked that," she replied, simply; and then laying the book aside, glanced at the package he had brought.

He opened it and gave it into her hands. I did not know what he would think of the child; she was so wild with delight over those bits of glass.

"Oh, here is a cross!" she exclaimed, "right in the centre of this diamond, and it is hardly broken at all. I am so glad! And oh, how queer this is—do look, Miss Burney—why, it must be the tree in Paradise, there are apples on it, and a serpent climbing up to them. Isn't

that odd? And here is this beautiful little lamb! I'll hang that up in Willy's room. And oh, Mr. Hunter, what have you brought me? It is—it is the face of a saint—see what beautifully waving hair, and what loving eyes!"

"That is the head of my figure of St. John," he said, "the first copy in glass was broken on its way from the oven, and I happened to save the head. I am so glad you like it, Miss Josephine—it seemed as if I had very little to bring you, after all."

Jo laid her treasures one above another beside her, on the corner of the verandah, and pushing back her brown hair from her face, sat looking outward, in a sort of dream-like attitude, that made me wonder what the child was thinking of now. Jo was not pretty; no one had ever called her that; but she was such a brave, earnest, cheery little thing; and life was so fresh to her, that she made me think more than anything else of a little brown bird singing the sweetest of songs over every crumb it picks up.

"I know," said Jo, slowly, after this pause, "I know something that I wish you would paint in a little picture by itself, Mr. Hunter. It is a rock, down in a corner of the woods, just beyond our garden. The top of it is hollowed out, so it catches the rain like a little cup, and that makes moss grow around it! Then the birds fly down and drink from it. I wish you would paint that in a tiny picture, Mr. Hunter. I never told anybody about it before."

He looked at her wistfully, and I looked at him. Just in that brief moment I seemed to realize that the man before me, though young in years, perhaps, had lived and suffered much. But the next instant I blamed myself for the fancy, he laughed so brightly, and there was such a charm of buoyant enthusiasm about him, as he answered—

"That is just what I should like to paint. St. Robin's Well, we will call it. Won't you show it to me, Miss Josephine?"

Jo looked up at me.

"Shall we go, Miss Burney? it is only down the garden and over the wall, in among the maples."

"You may go, my dear," I said, "and show Mr. Hunter the way. It is a good while since I climbed a wall, and I will sit quietly here till you return."

So the two left me, and walked away together down the winding garden-path. As I watched them, now going out of sight and now re-appearing again among the shrubbery, somehow I began to think of Mrs. Browning's poem about the swan's nest, and of the child who sat "alone 'mong the beeches in the meadow," dreaming child-fancies of what it would be to be loved, and saying to herself, that when the true knight should come, victor over all:—

"Riding on his steed of steeds,  
Unto him I will discover  
That swan's nest among the reeds!"

## III.

I SUPPOSE I had sat there musing for some time, when the sound of the gate aroused me, and there was Cecile coming, queen-like, along the walk. She had twined a spray of sweetbriar roses in her hair; it helped to keep her veil on she said; it certainly touched her calm fair beauty with the charm that such flowers always have.

"Ah, Miss Burney, how comfortable you look," she said; "see, I have fairly begun my work, the centre square is half done. Isn't that a splendid shade of maize? But you should see Mrs. Dawson's."

I looked and admired, and began to wonder why Jo did not come back.

"Why, there she is!" exclaimed Cecile with an air of surprise; "coming through the shrubbery; and Mr. Hunter is with her! That is very singular, isn't it, Miss Burney?"

"No," I replied, "they went together to find some place Jo thought would be pretty in a picture. A rock, I believe."

"A rock!" echoed Cecile, not taking her gaze from the two, who had almost reached us.

"Good afternoon, Miss Dormer," said the artist, pleasantly. "I would shake hands, but for this great clump of moss I am carrying."

"Clump of moss!" uttered Cecile, seeming only able to reiterate.

"Yes," said Jo, "it's to plant down by the rock under our larch-tree. I always wished moss grew there. Do you suppose it will die? And, oh, Cecile, Mr. Hunter is going to paint a picture for us of the dearest spot down in the woods!"

"Yes," assented Mr. Hunter, as he put down the moss; "your sister has shown me one of the loveliest spots my eyes ever met, Miss Dormer. She has a true heart, and an artist's eye."

Cecile smiled politely, and turned to carry her pattern and worsteds into the house. An unlucky sweep of her long dress dislodged the little heap of stained glass lying on the verandah floor, and two or three pieces fell crashing to the ground. Jo started forward with a cry of dismay, and Cecile looked round to see what had happened.

"Oh, it is the saint's head!" said Jo, mournfully.

"Why, what have I done?" asked Cecile.

"Only broken some old glass," said the painter, with an odd tone in his voice. "Not quite so much pastime as breaking hearts, is it, Miss Dormer?"

I was startled by the look Cecile cast upon him—an appealing, tender look—and she seemed moved out of her usual quiet. But he did not see it; he was stooping to help Jo pick up the pieces.

"Never mind," he said; "I'll bring you something better next time."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Jo, good-naturedly; "it was a bad place to leave them in. I might have thought they would get knocked off."

Cecile quietly went into the house to put away her crochet. She remained in her room a short time, and when she came down to us again, calm and shining, Mr. Hunter had gone.

The next few days passed peacefully by. Mr. Dormer was away from home on a business expedition, so we had the house to ourselves, and made the most of it too, for the weather was not propitious for out-door excursions. Cecile seemed indefatigable at her crochet, and though sometimes when I came into the room the needle would be lying still in her listless fingers, yet afterwards it would fly through the meshes with greater rapidity than ever, and marvellous results in maize, green, and violet were already produced.

I heard Jo and the children recite their lessons, and after that either took work of my own or read aloud for the general benefit, while Cecile crocheted, and Jo busied herself over some mysterious drawing, in which at present I could see nothing but a succession of straight lines and arches. She had spoiled two or three sheets of paper in its service, but went on making measurements, and every few moments carefully adding a pencil-mark.

We were left wholly undisturbed by callers. Only once the bell rang, and Cecile looked eagerly up. It was the postman, and he brought her a letter. She opened it without haste, and began to read, letting the envelope fall on the floor. Little Willy Dormer picked it up, and spelled out the postmark with great distinctness—Brentford. Brentford! I knew there was a certain Colonel Freeling living there whom Cecile had once easily flirted with, and as easily refused. Could the letter be from him? I watched her a little anxiously, but her face did not change, and when she had read it all, she crumpled it up and threw it into her work-basket.

"Do sit up straight, Jo," I said, "you are getting round-shouldered."

Jo started into erectness, and looked dreamily at her drawing.

"I know who's coming here this evening," said Willy, beginning to grow talkative.

Nobody asked whom he meant, and after a minute's pause he went on.

"Mr. Hunter is coming, because this morning he asked me if the ladies were all at home. And I told him yes."

"Where did you see Mr. Hunter?" I asked, wondering to myself how it is that boys always get everywhere without one's knowing it.

"Oh, I was down at the factory," said Willy, with a business-like air. "I went to get coloured glass like Jo's, to break all up in little bits. I am going to make a kaleidoscope. So Mr. Hunter and me, we got talking."

"You should say Mr. Hunter and I," I answered.

This was all that was said to his communication; in fact, I thought very little of it myself, for boys are always imagining. But when we

met at tea, I wondered if Willy's words had had anything to do with Cecile's appearance; she had dressed with such care, and she looked so queenly and full of grace, with an unwonted brightness in her eye and cheek. I glanced at Jo; she had a pleased, pre-occupied look in her earnest brown eyes, which were bent upon her plate. She had not changed her dress of brown serge, and her short dark hair was pushed back plainly and smoothly under her school-girl net. I wondered as I poured out the tea, what the child could be thinking about. All of a sudden she looked up brightly from the plate she had been studying, and exclaimed—"What pretty china this is, Miss Burney! This is the plate that has an old castle painted on it, and there is such a lovely window that I never noticed before; such a singular, quaint shape. I don't know whether it is proper, but it is lovely!"

"Who ever heard of an improper window?" asked Cecile. "Please pass the muffins, Jo, while they are hot."

"Oh, Cecile, how beautiful you look!" said Jo, admiringly, for the first time regarding her sister's toilet.

"Do I?" said Cecile, with a little smile.

After tea we all betook ourselves to the drawing-room, though I was speculating uneasily in my own mind whether Cecile would wish me to go up stairs in case any gentleman should call. I instinctively held some good old-fashioned English notions about young ladies and their chaperons; but Cecile was always allowed so much freedom at her Aunt Wild's, and she was really in some things so much more experienced and self-controlled than I, that I felt something like a nervous hen chaperoning a fair young swan, who was sure to take to the water in spite of me. Still we had always got along together very amicably, and circumstances generally settled the course of things without vexing or thwarting any one of us.

It happened so this evening, for when Mr. Hunter came, he asked for the "ladies." And why not? I was vexed at myself for having been so premature in imagining any approach to one of Cecile's flirtations. She was at the piano when he came in, and he begged her not to leave it. Jo looked up with a friendly glance of welcome, and, as he passed her, he said, in a low voice: "The picture of St. Robin's Well is almost done, Miss Josephine. I will bring it to you when it is finished."

"Oh, thank you!" she said, in her quick, eager way; and then, as he took his station by her sister's side at the piano, after a moment's pause, she bent closely over her drawing again.

How well Cecile sang that night! her very best; her voice was a pure soprano, with far-reaching notes; her music-teacher was an artist, and made her sing better than she knew. Her beautiful white hands wandered over the keys as if akin to the pure cold ivory. She went on singing as she had done before Mr. Hunter came in, snatches of sweet



ballads, gay little troubadour songs with a flash of passion in them, finishing with one I had never heard before, and which I dropped my work to listen to.

"My ornaments are arms,  
My pastime is in war,  
My bed is cold upon the wold,  
My lamp, yon star.

My journeyings are long,  
My slumbers short and broken ;  
From hill to hill I wander still,  
Kissing thy token.

I ride from land to land,  
I sail from sea to sea—  
Some day more kind I fate may find,  
Some night kiss thee !"

"Oh, that is exquisite !" said Mr. Hunter, drawing nearer, as if in a sort of fascination, his eyes fixed upon the beautiful singer.

"What is it ?" he asked.

"A wandering knight's song, written three hundred years ago," answered Cecile, in a soft monotone almost like sadness.

"Cecile," interrupted Jo, without looking up from her work, "sing that about Ruth and Naomi."

And Cecile sang it. It was grand and pure, and touching beyond compare. Her soul seemed to go forth with the words, making her voice lofty, sustained and noble ; and when she reached and sang that heart-penetrating strain :—

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee ; for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried—"

Then it seemed as if she herself were pleading through the words of Ruth, and her dewy blue eyes were upturned to meet Mr. Hunter's. I wondered that he did not seem to notice it more, for he only said, gently :

"Your voice is improved since last year, Miss Dormer ; you could not have sung like this then. What a noble recitative it is !"

"It is a pretty piece," said Cecile. The pleading look still brooded in her eyes, but it found no more expression in word or manner, because she had ceased to sing, and it was as if a magic key had locked her nature up again. She replaced her music in the rack, and drew her light shawl up about her graceful shoulders. There was a brief silence in the room, and Mr. Hunter still stood thoughtfully by the piano.

## IV.

"I HAVE designed a cathedral!" exclaimed Jo, in a clear, triumphant tone, throwing down her pencil.

We all started. I laughed nervously, and Cecile turned round on the music-stool. Then we drew about the table, to see what the girl meant. So this was why the straight lines and pointed arches had been so carefully jotted down; they had really grown into a harmonious shape.

"Four rows of columns, eight columns in a row, and each row supporting nine arches. That is on quite a grand scale," said Mr. Hunter, with a smile.

"Oh, don't laugh at it, please!" entreated Jo.

"Indeed, I will not!" he replied. "The perspective is not quite perfect, and there are a few other mistakes, which none but an architect could very well avoid, but apart from that it is a very good design. I can see the idea of a beautiful church in it."

Jo's lip quivered; she really seemed to care for his praise. I believe her whole heart had been so wrapped up in her drawing that it had become dear to her, and she could not bear to have it condemned.

"But where in the world are the pews?" asked Cecile, after looking at it a few moments in wild amazement.

"Why, all down there, between the columns. I could not stop to mark them all, but you can imagine them," said Jo, laughingly.

"That's a unique window in the transept," said Mr. Hunter, laying his finger on a point that much resembled the window in the quaint old castle, painted on the China tea-plate. Jo gave me a merry glance.

"Well," said Cecile, slowly, as if considering the matter, "I don't see, Jo, what in the world ever makes you think of such things. I never do!" And our beauty looked with a grave air down at her exquisite white hands.

Mr. Hunter smiled almost imperceptibly. Then he took up Jo's drawing, and made a proposition.

"Miss Jo," he said, "will you let me keep this, in return for something which I am just now reminded lies wrapped in paper, by my hat, in the hall?"

Jo looked up in great curiosity.

"I will get it and see," she said, and started for the hall. I heard the rattle of the paper as she pushed it aside; then there was a little silence; and after a moment more Jo came back in a maze of delight.

"Oh, look at it, Cecile!" she exclaimed. "Look at it, Miss Burney!"

It was a round piece of stained glass, fitted to hang like a transparency in a window, the outer border of golden brown, the centre a

heavenly blue, on which was pictured a cup or goblet, with a hand reaching out above as if in blessing.

Mr. Hunter was pleased with her pleasure, and showed it. The drawing of the church plan went, without remonstrance, into his coat-pocket, and Cecile, retreating from the table, stood by the window looking out at the dark night. She did not play or sing any more; in fact, the evening was ended, and our visitor rose to depart.

Cecile went immediately up to her room, after giving an even-toned Good-night, but Jo sat still at the table, her head resting on her two hands, and her eyes fixed upon her present. I put away my work, closed the shutters, and fastened down the windows.

"Come, Jo," I said, then, "early to bed and early to rise, you know, and then you will be fresh to study that hard geometry lesson in the morning."

She looked up at me dreamily.

"Miss Burney, I am nineteen now," she said, "and I am not tired of books and study, for I do love them dearly. But when shall I go out into the world—when shall I see more of life? It seems so new and wonderful to me; I have never thought much about it before."

"It will come soon enough, dear; God knows it comes soon enough to all of us," I answered, with a sigh in my heart.

"Not that I am impatient," she said again. "I think it would be beautiful to go on studying and dreaming for ever, just as I have done lately."

"That's right, dear Jo," I said; "and now come, it is really getting late."

She rose and went, kissing me first, and taking her present with her. From thenceforth it hung in her window at the foot of her bed, where she could see it as soon as she waked in the morning. I sat up an hour later after she had gone, and wrote my monthly letter to the girls' Aunt Wild, giving her as usual some little account of our studies and doings, and casually mentioning Mr. Hunter's calls. I finished and folded the sheet, and then remembered that my envelopes were all gone, so that I must defer sealing it till morning. But, going up stairs, on my way to my room, I saw the light shining from under Cecile's door, and knew that she must be still moving about; so I spoke to her from outside, and asked if she could lend me an envelope. She told me to come in and help myself. On entering, I was surprised to find her sitting quietly by the window, doing nothing at all, and evidently no nearer going to bed than she had been an hour before.

"Why, you will take cold, Cecile," I said; "don't sit up any longer."

She rose at that, and in a thoughtful sort of way began removing her jewellery and the few flowers in her hair. I took one or two envelopes from her writing-desk, and was about going, when she said, as if to

detain me—"How different people are from each other, Miss Burney!"

"That is true," I replied, wondering a little.

"For example," she went on, "how different we four people were this evening. Miss Burney, what makes Jo think of so many things? I wish I could, but I cannot, no matter how hard I try. She is so quick and bright. Aunt Wild calls her 'little plain-face'; but I would gladly change faces with her, if I could only think of so many nice things to do and say!"

This was more wonderful than anything yet, Cecile wishing to change places with Jo.

"By the way, Cecile," I said, with my hand on the door, "you used to see Mr. Hunter at the Lakes last summer. Tell me something about him. He seems to me superior to most young men. Is he really so?"

"Pray excuse me," said Cecile, sleepily, "you are right about not sitting up too late, Miss Burney. I believe I *am* tired, and I have absolutely nothing to tell you about Mr. Hunter's character."

So I retreated to my own room.

#### V.

THAT next week I had a weary, dreary head-ache; it throbbed painfully in my temples, and beat like a merciless hammer through my brain. Hot weather, low state of the system, nervousness—these were the causes decided upon by the whole family, and they kindly commanded me to stay in my own room and rest. So there was an enforced vacation from lessons, and I suppose the boys had a glorious time of it. Mr. Dormer was at home again to take the responsibility of everything, and I thought to myself that if a headache I must have, perhaps this was as good a time as any for it. Cecile and Jo came in every little while to see me, laying soft hands on my brow, keeping the room cool and dark, and every day Jo put fresh flowers where I could look at them whenever my eyes opened. From little things that were said now and then, I knew that Mr. Hunter called two or three times, and it occurred to me to wonder whether he had brought Jo any more pictures, and whether Cecile had sung to him again with that look in her eyes.

It was Friday morning when I first felt quite myself again, so putting on my dress of governess-gray, and feeling very fresh and ready for work, I went down to breakfast. It was pleasant to see all the familiar faces around the table again; even the little boys' welcoming, "Good-morning, Miss Burney," made me feel glad at heart.

"We must go to work in our geometry with renewed energy, dear Jo," I said presently, thinking of the days we had missed. Jo glanced at me hastily; she did not answer a word, but blushed like a rose, and

then smiled, too, looking down at the table-cloth. Cecile sipped her coffee in unbroken silence. Mr. Dormer's eyes twinkled with fun, and then he laughed outright at my inquiring face.

"You look puzzled, Miss Burney," he said, with a half smile and half sigh; "the truth is, I am afraid you have lost a scholar. Our little Jo here has been learning life's greatest lesson in the last few weeks, unknown to me. No more geometry now, eh, Jo?"

"I think I looked more confused and amazed than before, I was so slow and unwilling to get at his meaning.

"Well, then, to speak plainly," he said, "the other day young Hunter asked my consent to his trying to win Jo for his bride, and as he seems absolutely in love with the child, and she with him, it became a serious matter; so I made a few proper inquiries, and finding really no excuse for stopping the whole thing, I had to let them settle it their own way last evening. Wonder what my sister Wild will say when she gets the letter I'm going to write her after breakfast!" he added, with a comical face of dismay.

Jo engaged! little school-girl Jo! I got up, and went round to her place and kissed her. But my mind seemed all in a whirl, and somehow I did not dare to look at Cecile.

After breakfast, Jo came to me in my own room, and told me all about it. How suddenly and quickly Love had budded and bloomed into perfect being in that young girl's heart!

"I think I must have loved him from the very first, Miss Burney," she told me ingenuously; "though I never thought about it, I never knew. Only I cared so much when I heard him coming, or even if you mentioned his name, after that day when we went down to the rock in the woods together. I felt then that he was *my* friend; we thought the same thoughts. But I did not think of love exactly. I could not help liking everything he liked, and it made me happy. Then when he told me what he had asked papa—that was last Tuesday—oh, you don't know how I felt. Everything seemed so strange and new, it made me tremble. I wanted to tell you all about it so much, but your head ached and they said you must be kept still. And I did not exactly like to tell Cecile all I felt, because——"

She hesitated, and I looked at her in amazement. What had *she* thought or noticed, that made her unable to tell Cecile?

"I won't keep anything from you," she said, after a minute, "though it is a sort of secret. You know he met Cecile at the Lakes last summer, and he thought he had never seen any one so beautiful in the world. You know Cecile flirts. Oh, how can she, Miss Burney! and she sang to him, and walked with him, and let him draw pictures of her face, till he could not think of anything but her, and so one day he almost told her he loved her. I can imagine just how lovely she must have been looking, can't you? Then she grew so cold, and made him understand plainly



that she could never think of him in that way, that she had only valued him as a friend; and after that they hardly spoke to each other. He felt hurt and mortified at first, but after that he did not care at all, and he amused himself by watching how she treated three or four other gentlemen in just the same way before the summer was ended. He is so glad it happened now, because he has me. But you see it makes me not exactly want to talk to Cecile about him; she might laugh at me. She has so many triumphs all the time, she would not know how much I cared for just my one that she threw aside. And she does not really care for pictures either, or any of the things that he does, she seems meant to be just lovely and beautiful. But, oh, Miss Burney, he says he loves me with my little brown face, more than if I was like a queen. I know he will never love anybody but me—doesn't it sound strange to hear me talking this way? But I do know it, and I love him so much I am too happy to speak. What makes me speak? I ought to go away and be still and think."

So this was my new Jo! just the same bright, sweet self as of old, but no longer my little school-girl; she was suddenly a woman, loving, trusting, her whole soul awake and intense.

How quickly we become accustomed to things. It soon seemed very natural for Mr. Hunter to come and go daily, and for Jo to be always the one to welcome him. Cecile had little to do with them; she occupied herself in all her usual ways, and never spoke of the engagement except in general terms. Perhaps she sat rather oftener alone, perhaps I found her oftener with her hands folded idly, her large blue eyes looking dreamily outward, and a certain gravity in the outline of her beautiful face. But it may be I was fanciful; people like me are apt to be; Cecile called on all her friends as frequently as ever; she worked wonderful things in worsted, she walked and drove with admiring gentlemen, she arrayed herself like the lilies of the field. Indeed, a lady friend said to me one day, "What very good spirits Miss Dormer seems to be in, this summer."

Suddenly her Aunt Wild came. She had written to congratulate Jo, and followed almost immediately after her letter. She had a thousand things to say, to suggest, to advise; but I think neither Jo nor Mr. Hunter listened to a word, they were so taken up with their pictures, and their air-castles, and their hours of happiness. At last Mrs. Wild confided in me.

"You see, Miss Burney," she began, "if Jo had belonged to me, of course I should have had other plans for her; but as it is, I really think she has done quite well. I suppose he makes two thousand a year from his designs for church windows and things, and then there is the sale of his pictures besides. I shall quite dismiss all care for Jo from my mind. I don't mind telling you," she went on, after a pause, "that when you wrote to me some weeks ago, mentioning Mr. Hunter's

calls, I felt worried. I thought it was Cecile, of course, and that would never do. They met at the Lakes last summer, and it was quite a desperate flirtation; but I felt proud of Cecile. She came out of it with flying colours, of course; she knew he was no sort of a match for her. With her beauty and high-bred air she might marry a prince. But I was a little afraid when your letter came, for all that; for the fellow is handsome and talented, though he does live by his wits. But what sort of an artist's wife would Cecile make? She cares no more for art than you do for a fiddlestick! I intend her to marry Colonel Freeling; he has fallen into an immense fortune since she refused him, and he is as wild about her as ever. So I shall take her to C—— with me next week, and you may be prepared to hear of another engagement in the family very soon, Miss Burney."

She stopped there, breathless and triumphant. I heard her in silence—it gave me a shocked, sad feeling to hear my dear girls disposed of so.

Cecile packed her great trunk, and went with her Aunt Wild to C——. She busied herself gaily the few days before, with all her little preparations and her new dresses. How lovely she looked when the hour of departure came, with the wild-rose flush in her cheeks, as she walked stately down the garden-path and took her place in the carriage. Mr. Hunter and Jo had somehow mistaken the hour, and were not there to say Good-bye to her.

"It is no matter," she said, smiling, "you must make my adieus for me. Good-bye, dear little Miss Burney!" She kissed me twice, and then turned her beautiful expectant face towards her aunt, who told the driver to whip up his horses and not miss the train.

It happened as Mrs. Wild had said. Three weeks after she wrote to her brother, to tell him of his daughter's engagement to Colonel Freeling, and she mentioned what a beautiful engagement-ring Cecile had received from her lover—a *solitaire* diamond of immense value. As Mr. Dormer read this, and we listened in silence, the thought somehow struck me that Cecile hereafter would be like that diamond, cold, lustrous, dazzlingly beautiful, *solitaire*, but upheld and surrounded with gold.

"I do hope Cecile will be happy!" said Jo, softly. "I suppose Colonel Freeling is the hero she has been waiting for all these years. I am so glad she has found him at last!"

So you see there are two ways of looking at the matter—and here my story pauses. The sisters are both to be married late in autumn. Cecile is with her aunt in London, preparing an elaborate *trousseau*, while here, at home, Jo and I sit together, working with hands of love upon a simple bridal outfit. But in the evening I sew alone; for then Mr. Hunter comes, and he and Jo of late have been very busy, with heads close together, designing a wonderful new rose-window for the organ-loft of our parish church.

## THE DAYS THAT ARE NO MORE.

Oh, memories of green and pleasant places,  
Where happy birds their wood-notes twittered low!  
Oh, love that lit the dear familiar faces  
We buried long ago!

From barren heights their sweetness we remember,  
And backward gaze with wistful yearning eyes,  
As hearts regret 'mid snowdrifts of December,  
The summer's sunny skies.

Glad hours that seemed their rainbow tints to borrow  
From some illumined page of fairy lore;  
Bright days that never lacked a bright to-morrow;  
Days that return no more.

Fair gardens with their many-blossomed alleys,  
And red-ripe roses breathing out perfume;  
Dim violet nooks in green sequestered valleys,  
Empurpled o'er with bloom.

Sunsets that lighted up the brown-leaved beeches,  
Turning their dusky glooms to shimmering gold;  
Moonlight that on the river's fern-fringed reaches  
Streamed, white-rayed, silvery cold.

O'er moorlands bleak we wander weary-hearted,  
Through many a tangled wild and thorny maze,  
Remembering as in dreams, the days departed,  
The bygone happy days.

J. T. L.